WOMEN
AND
ISLAM

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful!

Preface to the 1st Edition

One of the many misconceptions that are found regarding Islam these days- or those which are deliberately planted in the minds of unassuming people- is that Islam does not accord women the same status as men, and that it has imposed so many restrictions upon her that she consequently lags behind in all walks of life and is thus relegated to playing second fiddle to man. However, the truth remains that Islam was a pioneer of gender equality. It proclaimed that men and women are both equal before God and the basis of their success and failure is also the same. But it rejects the current idea of equality which assumes that it is imperative that both should have an equal role to play in every field, without which there can be no equality between them. Islam avers that the woman should take care of her home and that the man should shoulder the responsibilities of earning the bread. This is because their nature appeals to mutually distinct premises. God has allotted separate rights and duties to men and women and has commanded them to adhere to the same so that justice can be established in the practical life, without anyone's interests getting hurt.

I have authored a detailed book on this topic- '*Aurat Islami ma'ashre mein*' (Woman in Islamic Society) that has been published many years back.

This book also revolves around the same topic. Certain aspects that were left undefined in the previous book have been highlighted here, while those issues that have been detailed in that book have only been touched upon or have been summarily omitted in this book. I have tried to avoid a repitition of what has already been written in the previous book and have attempted to present a fresh content here. The previous book dealt primarily with ideological discussions. In this book, I have initiated every discussion with the relevant teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith in brief, and then proceeded with supplementing it with the life of the Prophet ﷺ, authentic historical incidents and certain practical examples. Thus, both these books deal with the same topic and complement each other.

The incidents mentioned in this book relate mostly to the early days of Islam, because it is these that we need to emulate. Very few examples have been cited from the later periods. At times, I have also included some points related to Islamic law without mentioning the edicts of the respectable jurists. Those interested in the same are requested to refer to books on jurisprudence.

The entire book has been based upon authentic data derived from the Qur'an, the Hadith (words and deeds reported from the Prophet ﷺ) and the Seerah (an account of his blessed life). Nothing has been said without providing proper references. Despite all the care that has been taken, there is always a possibility of mistakes having occurred. If you come across any error, I request you to acquaint me of the same. I shall correct it in the next edition and be extremely grateful to you.

The current year (1979 CE) is being celebrated all over the world as the Year of Women. Accordingly, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind has decided to provide a comprehensive introduction of the Islamic stand on women and the contributions of Muslim women. It is hoped that this book would prove useful in this endeavour. May God accept this effort, may it serve as a tool to properly introduce Islam and may our ladies be graced with the same spirit, skills and actions that were the hallmark of the ladies of the first generation of Islam. Amen.

25th February 1979 CE ***Jalaluddin Umari***

Introduction to the Current Edition

This book was first published thirty years back and was circulated on a large scale on the occasion of Year of Women (1979). Over the years, it has seen nine editions and its translations have been published in English, Hindi, Marathi and Telugu. It is also part of the syllabus of certain girls' madrasas. This time around, I have revised the content of this book and have arranged its topics in proper chapters. I have also revisited the references cited in the book and referred to the latest editions of those books wherever feasible. Towards the end of the book, I have also replied to a set of questions pertaining to the employment of ladies in the modern age. A bibliography has been provided as an appendix. It is hoped that these efforts would enhance the book and make it more useful. All these years, the layout of the book remained a reflection of its first edition. However, this time around, Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers (New Delhi) is publishing it with due diligence. I am extremely grateful to my brothers, Dr. Muhammad Raziul Islam Nadvi and Aarif Mustafa Nadvi for having proofread this book a couple of times and providing their valuable inputs. May God reward them abundantly and make them grow in knowledge and virtue.

28th April 2009 CE

Jalaluddin Umari

Translator's Note

To Allah is due all praise and gratitude, who is the Lord of the Worlds.

Peace and blessings be upon His trustworthy messenger, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.

It has indeed been an honour and privilege to translate this book. I have tried my best to keep this book as lively as I could; resorting to a flowing translation instead of sticking to a verbatim in English. This task is itself difficult because I was required to deviate from the idioms and phrases used in the Urdu text and, at the same time, convey the essence of those idioms in English keeping the intention of the author intact.

Although it is the ubiquitous case with all translations that the emotions and depth of words tend to get 'lost in translation', this is all the more pronounced with the Qur'an and the Hadith. These are unmatched in the richness of their language and are hence inimitable; making them extremely difficult to translate. As for the Qur'an passages interspersed in this book, I have almost always reproduced the translation offered by Saheeh International. Translating the Hadith is much more tedious and quite delicate an exercise because of the immense responsibility it entails. The concise sentences used by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and the cherry-picked words the Prophet has utilized can never by rendered in any

other language. I request the reader to not expect a perfect translation of the Hadith in any book. Having said this, I have tried my best to scout available translations of relevant aHadith from other sources to be as close to the actual meaning as possible, but errors are inevitable. Hadith scholars append even Arabic Hadith narrations with *Au kama qala Rasool Allah* ﷺ ('or something similar to this was said by the Messenger of Allah ﷺ'). Hence, the need for this refrain to be appended with translations cannot be overemphasized. I have not inserted this caveat through the text fearing loss of continuity, but I request the reader to keep this in mind wherever and whenever he or she comes across a Hadith narration- in Arabic or any other language.

Also, and for the same reason, I have not translated terminologies like Surah and ayat/ayaat as Chapters and verse(s), as is the usual (but erroneous) practice. Instead, I have let them remain, simply transliterating them.

All said and done, whatever justice I have been able to do with the original text I owe to none but God, and wherever I may have erred I blame my own weaknesses.

May Allah accept this work from the author and this translator.

September 2017 ***Dr. Parvez Mandviwala***

The Glory of Women
&
Her Role in the Family Structure

The announcement of Prophet Muhammad's mission in the 6th Century CE has been the single greatest event in human history. It was a turning point in the sense that it led to a renaissance of thought and perspective and revolutionized the life and character of every soul that it touched. Man began to think differently, changing the orientation of his sails. It was part of this great reformation that there occurred a complete shift in his point of view and attitude towards women. The relations of men and women began to get established on altogether new foundations.

Islam raises its voice against the slavery of Women

Before Islam, a woman's life was destined to slavery and servitude. She was considered inferior and denied any importance in society. She was labelled as the root cause of all evil and men were advised to protect themselves from women just as they used to protect themselves from serpents. She was sold and purchased in the markets like animals. She had no independent status of her own, being subjugated by man. She had no rights; she used to live off the mercy of men.

The manner in which Islam protested against the ignominious treatment meted out to her shook the

entire world with such force that there is not a soul today that has the audacity to justify her former state. It spoke out in no unclear terms that:

يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ ٱتَّقُوا۟ رَبَّكُمُ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَكُم مِّن نَّفْسٍ وَٰحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَآءً ۚ وَٱتَّقُوا۟ ٱللَّهَ ٱلَّذِى تَسَآءَلُونَ بِهِۦ وَٱلْأَرْحَامَ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ①

"O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer."

[Surah anNisa' ayat 1]

This was an announcement of the fact that the false distinctions this world has created between man and woman are all hollow and unacceptable. They are completely. unfounded. All men and women have a common parentage, a single ancestry. Neither is anyone virtuous by birth nor debased. No one is superior or inferior to anyone else. All are equal and have the same status. Any discrimination on the grounds of family or tribe, race or colour, nationality or community, language or occupation is absolutely wrong and would not be tolerated.

Islam- the Torchbearer of Gender Equality

This is also a refutation of the discrimination that is being practiced between men and women from time immemorial. It has been stressed that the wife of the first man was not of a separate species; rather, she was as human as the man was. It says that man was not paired with an altogether new creation; rather, she was extracted from the man himself. Countless men and women were born from this common ancestry. These

men and women married each other and formed families, giving rise to the human civilization we see today. Discriminating between them is akin to discriminating between the two arms of human species, a rude separation between two parts of a single whole. There can indeed be no better explanation of men and women equality and their equal status in society.

Along with this, it was also told that all human beings are the creation of One God and the children of a single pair of parents. Hence, they ought to worship One God alone, adopt piety and God-consciousness in their lives, and at the same time they should honour their mutual relationships. This emphasized upon the honour of women along with the honour of men.

The success of men and women is related to faith and good deeds:

Islam eradicated the notion that a man is honourable and superior simply because he is a man, while a woman is debased and inferior just because she happens to be a woman. Islam considers both as equals. No one has inherently been made superior or inferior to the other. Instead, whichever man or woman decks up his register with faith and good deeds would be successful in this world and the next, and he/she who is bereft of these factors would be unsuccessful and remain hopeless in both the worlds.

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ اَوْ اُنْثٰى وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً ۚ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ اَجْرَهُمْ بِاَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ۝

"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live

a good life, and We will surely give them their reward according to the best of what they used to do."

[Surah anNahl ayat 97]

This is an announcement and a proclamation that a person's destiny does not depend upon his gender, but upon his faith and deeds. He who is a bearer of faith and good deeds would be granted a good life in this world; such a person would not deviate from the straight middle path to venture on the wrong path in any phase of his life. God would bestow upon him pure provisions and reward him with patience and tranquillity in times of distress. In the afterlife, the gates of Paradise would be flung open for him and he would be eligible for its eternal benefits. This is a general rule which has no relation to the gender of the person concerned.

A woman's sphere is her home:

However, Islam maintains that there is a difference in the fields of work of men and ladies. The primary field of a woman's activities is her home, the external world being the field of the man. Accordingly, the Qur'an has instructed the wives of the Prophet ﷺ to abide in their homes, and the same instruction holds true for every such lady who has faith in Allah and the Prophet ﷺ.

وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ

"And abide in your houses" [Surah alAhzab ayat 33]

This ayat commands ladies to stay in their houses, which means that her sphere of work is her home. Her activities should not be such that they would keep her away from her responsibilities at home.

Two objections and their replies:

Two objections are usually raised agaisnt Islam's stand that the primary sphere of a woman is her house and family. One of these is that burdening the woman with domestic responsibilities would prevent her from earning money, and her status in society would thus continue to remain weak in this regard.

The first thing that should be clear in this context is that Islam does not prevent a woman from pursuing her economic interests. It has, albeit, prescribed certain limits and restrictions, abiding by which she is free to adopt any mode of earning as she wishes. It is true that her domestic engagements would have an effect upon her financial endeavours and she cannot put in all her time and efforts in this field as a man can. As a solution, Islam makes it obligatory upon man to provide for the expenses of the woman and arrange for her needs and requirements.

The second objection that is raised is that a woman thus becomes bounded by the four walls of the house. Neither can her skills be harnessed in other walks of life, nor is she able to serve the society to her full potential.

However, this objection is unfounded. Islam never says that a woman should keep herself away from all extra-domestic work. All it says is that she is primarily the queen and manager of her house. She should not disrupt her own house while trying to develop the outside world. External interests and activities should not keep her time and resources so busy that her house turns into a mere place of relaxation where she comes to unwind, take short naps and refreshments. After she has fulfilled her domestic responsibilities, she is free to focus on her financial pursuits and can pay attention to

other fields as per her conditions, inclination and interests. History is witness to the fact that Muslim women have indeed taken interest and left their mark in various social fields without forsaking their natural premises.

The most important thing to note is that Islam has offered a very high social status to women. Owing to this, she leads a respected and dignified life without any inferiority complex whatsoever, and her resources are utilized towards the establishment of a clean and pure society with the assistance of men.

Why are their spheres of work mutually different?

Now let us discuss why Islam has stipulated separate spheres for men and women. There are two reasons for this.

First reason: To safeguard their honour and modesty

The first reason is that it ensures the protection of their honour and modesty. Whenever they work in the same field, it would be difficult for them to lead a modest life. If men and women receive coeducation in schools and colleges, are involved in mixed sports and games and recreational events in parks and grounds, transact trade and business freely and casually in markets together and meet each other in public and private without any hindrance or restriction; and if this goes on not for just a couple of days or weeks but for years together, they having grown from childhood to youth to old age in this very condition, then it is but natural for their carnal desires to get aroused. They would then easily get involved in sexual misconduct.

We come across some very alarming consequences of such a mixed culture in societies where it is common today. Their honour and modesty was violated and sexual anarchy has spread like an epidemic. Its correction has become so difficult that it has come to be accepted as a social evil that has no remedy and its ugly consequences are also being quietly tolerated.

Honour and modesty is apparently a moral value, but it decides the fate of the entire society. A society that has no regard for honour and modesty pulls men into the quagmire of illicit sexual relationships, giving rise to a distinct culture, society, custom and character. Every aspect of this society ignites and flares up man's carnal desires. In sharp contrast, the society that values the importance and station of honour and modesty comes to be established on foundations that are quite contrary to the ones discussed above. Every aspect of such a society reflects personal integrity and purity of character, with piety and chastity being a part of the environment.

Islam is very particular about this matter. It has strictly prohibited men and women from mixing up freely. Men and women who are unrelated to each other are not allowed to share living space or even work space, lest they end up putting themselves in such a precarious condition that they find it difficult to get out of it. It has not just disallowed illicit sexual relations, but has also instructed men and women from going anywhere close to it...

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزِّنَىٰٓ إِنَّهُۥ كَانَ فَٰحِشَةً ۖ وَسَآءَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٣٢﴾

"And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way."

[Surah Bani Israil ayat 32]

Second reason: Difference in abilities

The second reason for stipulating two different spheres for men and women is that they both possess different abilities and skill-sets. It is a fact that women are physically weaker than men; she cannot endure physically demanding work. She also has certain factors associated with her that keep her away from uninterrupted and strenuous activities. Her youth begins with monthly periods, and this continues till she reaches old age. She also has to undergo the pangs of pregnancy, childbirth and lactation. All these factors affect her health, her abilities and her psychology, precluding her from engaging in continuous and tiring activities. Hence, it is the natural demand of justice that a woman should be subjected to a lighter burden than that expected to be borne by a man. It is thereby proper to hand over the tasks involving intense labour to men and involve women in those tasks that are not too physically exhausting. In order to facilitate this, Islam has asked women to take care of the house and men to fulfil the other responsibilities.

This is the very demand of a woman's nature, inclination and basic psychology. Qualities like hard work, magnanimity, empathy and sympathy, sacrifice, patience, forbearance and selfless service are found more in ladies than in men. This makes it possible for her to fill her environment with smiles and happiness, peace and tranquility, warmth and love. However, in order to bear the extremes and difficulties of life and to move ahead facing all ups and downs, it is necessary for a person to possess the attributes of boldness, determination and dedication, strength and courage, which are found more in men than in women. The environs of the home and family are comparatively

more relaxed, making it more conducive for a woman's qualities to emerge out and be fruitful. A man can face the trials and tribulations of life. Hence, it is but natural for him to handle those.

Leaving the house- a disadvantage for women:

Removing a woman from her natural sphere and subjecting her to a sphere that goes against her nature is by no means a favour unto her. Far from it being advantageous, she has only to lose in such a bargain.

First and foremost, a woman is compelled to go through monthly periods, pregnancy, motherhood and lactation at regular intervals of her life. A man does not have to go through all this. Hence, burdening her with man's responsibilities as well is a grave in justice that is meted out to her.

Secondly, the woman is the queen of the house. Here, she gets the love and affection of her father, brothers, husband, children and other family members and her rights and liberties are also taken care of. If a woman refuses to shoulder the responsibility of the house, then she is not entitled to demand these rights. In such a case, she would have to step out of her comfort zone to earn a living and work in a field where she would have to compete with people who are much stronger than she is. There is hardly any possibility then that she would ever outrun men.

The house commands basic importance:

For a lady, the place of honour and dignity is her house, not the market. However, in contemporary times, people are largely oblivious of the importance of family and home. Hence, when it is said that the

house is her primary sphere, it is taken as a form of injustice to the woman, that she is being subjected to humiliating work, that she is not being granted the rights that are due to her, and that this is a trick to keep her status perennially inferior. However, the family is the foundation of every society. The importance of the house is in no way less than that of the market or the office. The service that the lady provides in raising the family is much more crucial that the other tasks that she performs or can ever perform in the outside world. Some of these aspects are being discussed here:

The role of a woman in the house:

1. Human beings are engulfed in countless social, political and cultural issues. These are compounded by issues of health, sickness, wealth, poverty, trouble and ease. At times, a person has to sweat it out to fulfil his financial needs. He has to undergo a lot of stress and difficulties to ensure the prosperity and development of his family. In such situations, what he needs most is peace of mind and tranquility. It is only the house that can provide this. But if he cannot find peace and tranquility in his house, then life would become miserable for him. Islam tells us that a woman should make the house an abode of peace and serenity so that the man may forget his worries once he reaches home and get refreshed for another day of toil and struggle.
2. It is an undisputed fact that breast-milk is the best food for an infant. A mother cannot properly feed her child if she has to leave home and work outside all day. Even as a toddler and a young lad, the satisfactory upbringing of the child can be expected

from the mother alone. It is not sufficient to provide the child with a healthy and balanced food to ensure his all round development; an effort, a sense of empathy and the motherly touch are as much important. If these emotional requirements of the child are not met at home, then his personality would wither away and it would 'develop' in absolutely wrong terms. The fount of these emotions can be none other than the caring arms of the mother; no other person can fill this void. The child would keep yearning for these feelings if his mother remains out all day and would thus remain deprived of them.

3. The mother is the most suitable person to train and educate her child in his initial years. This is because the education of a child requires his teacher to be extremely kind and gentle, one who is aware of his nature and understands him, one who would tolerate his mischief and correct him with patience and forbearance. Moreover, the child should also love his teacher, regard the teacher's curt speech as concern and good-intentioned and accept the teacher's strict attitude. Such a relation is possible only between a mother and her child. Neither is it found between anyone else, nor can it even be expected.

   Look at it from another aspect. From the point of view of a child's education, it is essential that there should be a relation between the student and the teacher. The stronger this relationship, the more would the child gain from it. It is for this very reason that large batches are not considered beneficial in schools, because this creates hurdles in forging a relation between the teacher and her

students. Smaller batches are always preferred, because they lead to a personal relation with the teacher. Similarly, the manner in which a mother can educate her few children cannot be expected of educational institutions.

The education of many children remains deficient because they lack a good tutor at home or their parents cannot afford one. Some parents even have reservations about appointing a tutor for their daughters. But if the mother is capable enough to teach her children at home and regards this as her responsibility, not only can the expenditure on education be reduced, but a lot of concerns can also be allayed.

On the sidelines, it is also important to note from the Muslim community's perspective that the inclination towards religious education is sharply declining these days. Only a few children obtain religious education. When the child reaches a suitable age, he is sent to school. He does not get the opportunity to get acquainted with even the fundamentals of Islam. This results in many children remaining bereft of basic religious knowledge even if their parents are very pious and righteous. This is because the father has no time to cater to his children at home and the mother is either uneducated or uninterested. However, if the mother is capable of imparting religious education to her kids and also takes interest in doing so, then the child would not remain oblivious of Islam even if he is regular at school.

The worth of a mother is very important even from the aspect of grooming a child. The mother is the child's primary role model. The child keeps

witnessing her actions and mannerisms day in and day out and tries to emulate her. He maintains the same relations with other family members as maintained by his mother. In this regard, his mother is his true teacher who sets the sails of his character and personality.

The fact remains that the society cannot be properly built unless the home is built properly. Hence, Islam has absolved women of all other responsibilities save this important one. It does not want to burden her with anything more. She has even been exempted from earning money for the household. For her, taking care of the house is as good as getting engaged in *jihad* (religious struggle). Anas bin Malik (God be pleased with him) narrates that some ladies asked the Prophet ﷺ that while the men are able to engage in virtuous deeds and earn divine rewards by participating in *jihad*, what should we do to obtain the same rewards that men get from participating in *jihad* in the cause of God? The Prophet ﷺ replied, "Whoever among you abides in her house would receive the rewards of participating in *jihad* in the cause of God."[1]

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[1] Ibn Katheer, Tafseer alQur'an alAzeem: 6/430. The chain of this narration has been disputed upon.

The Muslim Lady
(in the house and the family)

The family is the primary institution of society. The proper establishment of society is dependent upon the proper establishment of family. As mentioned earlier, Islam has laid the basic responsibility of the family on women. But it has seen to it that this responsibility does not affect her legal and moral status in any adverse manner. On the one hand, it has itself guaranteed the protection of her rights by means of legal decrees, and on the other hand, it has instructed the entire society to treat her in the best possible manner. Islam creates an environment in which the woman gets to lead her life with honour and dignity in whatever position she might assume. There can be no interference in her honour and respect as long as this environment is maintained. She would not only be granted all the legal rights that an Islamic society has to offer but she would also retain her high social status.

A woman has three fundamental positions in a family- mother, wife and daughter. Among other relations, she is also a sister. In all these positions, Islam has given her such an exalted and superior status that no person can take her high position away from her while remaining a Muslim.

The respect of a mother:

In Islam, the highest rank after God and His Prophet ﷺ is that of the mother. It has enjoined good treatment with both parents and has commanded us to obey them. This is because we are indebted to both of them. The Qur'an and the Hadith, however, highlight the favours of the mother:

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَىٰ وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالُهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿١٤﴾

"And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the [final] destination." *[Surah Luqman ayat 14]*

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمْلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا

"And We have enjoined upon man, to his parents, good treatment. His mother carried him with hardship and gave birth to him with hardship, and his gestation and weaning [period] is thirty months."

[Surah alAhqaf ayat 15]

Both parents are involved in taking care of the child, his upbringing, education and grooming. However, it is only the mother who has to go through the demanding phases of pregnancy, delivery and feeding the child. Bearing the child for nine months, delivering the child despite the risk of losing her life while doing so and then exerting her body to provide milk for the child- all the while being extremely cautious with herself is not an easy task by any means. The father does not have any role to play in enduring

these hardships. Hence, her favours exceed that of the father.

There are many aHadith that encourage us to serve, obey and be kind to our parents. We enumerate some aHadith here that focus on kind treatment to mothers in various ways:

1. The Prophet ﷺ has stressed on meting out good treatment to one's mother more than that meted out to one's father. He says,

   أُوْصِى إِمْرأً بأمِّهِ أُوْصِىٰ امرأً بِأمِّهِ أُوْصِىٰ امرأً بأمِّهِ أُوْصِىٰ امرأً بِأَبِيْهِ۔

   "I enjoin each one to honour his mother. I enjoin each one to honour his mother. I enjoin each one to honour his mother. I enjoin each one to honour his father."[1]

   Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her) narrates:

   قُلْتُ يَارَسُولَ اللّٰه! مَنْ اَعْظَمُ النَّاسِ حقًا على المرأةِ قَال زوجُهَا قُلْتُ مَن اعظَمُ النَّاسِ حقًا علَى الرَّجُلِ قَالَ أُمُّهَا۔

   I submitted, O Messenger of God ﷺ, 'Who has the most right upon a woman?' He replied, 'Her husband'. I asked, 'Who has the most right upon a man?' He replied, 'His mother'.[2]

   Some people think that the Prophet ﷺ has stressed upon good treatment with one's mother because the mother is weaker than the father. It is possible that this might also be a reason. However, the primary reason for doing so is that the favours of a mother far exceed those of a father, and she rightfully deserves more attention.

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[1] *Ibn Majah: Kitaab alAdab (Book of Etiquette), Baab Birre walidain. Hakim: alMustadrak ala alSahihain, Kitaab albirr wassalaat, Hadith #7243.*

[2] *Hakim: alMustadrak ala alSahihain, Kitaab albirr wassalaat, Hadith #7244.*

2. It is evident from the Qur'an and the Hadith that the greatest of all major sins is to associate someone with God. Many aHadith follow this up with disobedience to one's parents, giving it second rank only after God.[1]

   There are separate injunctions that deal with disobedience to one's mother, making it impermissible to do so. The Prophet ﷺ has said,

   إِنَّ اللّٰهَ حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ عُقُوقَ الأُمَّهَاتِ --- و وَأَدَالبَنَاتِ۔

   "God has made it impermissible for you to disobey your mothers... and to bury your daughters alive."[2]

   The Prophet ﷺ made mention of ten evils and said that that when the Muslim community would begin practicing these, punishments and hardships would descend upon it. One of these is:

   اَطَاعَ الرَّجُلُ زَوْجَتَهُ وَعَقَّ اُمَّهُ وَبَرَّصَدِيقَه و جَفَّاابَاه۔

   "Man would obey his wife and disobey his mother. He would be good to his friends and unkind to his father."

   In one narration, disobedience to one's parents has been enumerated as one of the signs of the apocalypse [3] (at a time when evil would be widespread on earth).

3. Good treatment with one's mother has been said to be a means of getting one's sins forgiven and gaining entry into Paradise.

   Lady Aishah narrates that Harithah bin Numan (God be pleased with him) was most kind to his mother. On one occasion, the Prophet ﷺ

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[1] Bukhari: Kitaab alAdab, Baab Aqooq alWalidain min alKabair. Muslim: Kitaab allman, Baab alKabair wa Akbarha.

[2] Bukhari: Kitaab alAdab, Baab Aqooq alWalidain. Muslim: Kitaab alAqdhiyah, Baab anNahi ann Kathratal Masail.

[3] Tirmizi: Abwaab alFitan, Baab maja'a fi aShraat alSa'a.

exclaimed, 'I saw Paradise in my dream, where I could hear someone reciting the Qur'an. I enquired: Whose voice is this? I was told that it was the voice of Harithah bin Numan'. Thereafter, he told his companions, 'This is the reward for being good to one's mother. This is the reward for being good to one's mother'.[1]

Abdullah ibn Umar (God be pleased with him) narrates that a person came to the Prophet ﷺ and submitted, 'I have committed a major sin. Is there any way I can atone for it?' The Prophet asked him, 'Is your mother alive?' The man replied in the negative. The Prophet enquired, 'Is your maternal aunt alive?' The man said 'Yes'. The Prophet instructed him, 'Be kind towards her'.[2]

This shows that not only the mother, but kind treatment to her close relatives can also atone for one's sins.

4. Serving the mother is more important than serving the father. The status of everyone else is secondary to that of the mother. Abu Hurairah narrates that a man asked the Prophet 'O Messenger of God! Who among the people is the most worthy of my good companionship?' The Prophet said: Your mother. The man said, 'Then who?' The Prophet said: Then your mother. The man further asked, 'Then who?' The Prophet said: Then your mother. The man

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[1] Mishkaat alMusabeeh: Kitaab alAadaab, Kitaab fi alBirr wassalaat with Sharah alSunnah and Baihaqi. Also, a narration by Hakim in alMustadrak, Kitaab alBirr wassilah Hadith # 7247.

[2] Tirmizi: Abwaab alBirr wassalaat, Baab ma ja'a fi birr alKhalah. Hakim: alMustadrak, Kitaab alBirr wassilah Hadith # 7261.

asked again, 'Then who?' The Prophet said: Then your father.[1]

In another Hadith, it has been narrated that a companion asked the Prophet 'O Messenger of God! Who among the people is the most worthy of my good treatment? The Prophet said: Your mother. The man said, 'Then who?' The Prophet said: Then your mother. The man further asked, 'Then who?' The Prophet said: Then your mother. The man asked for the fourth time, 'Then who?' The Prophet said: Then your father. After him, he who is closest to you in relation is entitled most to your good treatment.[2]

Qazi Ayaz states that: Some people have stated that both parents are equally deserving of good treatment, but the majority of scholars aver that the mother is more entitled to good treatment than the father. Imam Nawawi says, "This is the correct opinion. This is because there are clear aHadith in its support." Harith Mahasabi states, "The religious scholars have reached a consensus that the mother is more entitled to good treatment than the father."[3]

There are different narrations that speak of good treatment to the mother as being two times and three times more important than that meted out to the father. Imam Tahawi states that the narrations that say that 'a person should well-treat his mother

[1] Bukhari: Kitaab alAdab, Baab Mann ahaqq annassa bihusna assahbat. Muslim: Kitaab alBirr wassilah, Baab Birr alWalidain.

[2] Abu Dawood: Kitaab alAdab, Baab Birr alWalidain. Tirmizi: Kitaab alBirr wassilah, Baab ma ja'a fi Birr alWalidain.

[3] Nawawi, Sharah Muslim. Vol 8, Section 16, Page 83.

three times more than the father' are much stronger.[1]

Imam Ahmad says that the father would be obeyed and his commands fulfilled, but as far as good treatment is concerned, three out of four shares would be reserved for the mother.[2]

Islam has not only asked us to fulfil the legal rights of parents, but has enjoined good treatment towards them. This includes granting their legal rights to them in a gracious and loving manner without considering it to be burden, and it also includes treating them as kindly as possible, beyond the call of duty. Here, the rights of the mother command more emphasis. The mother should be treated in a much better manner than a person treats his father.

Rights of a wife

Islam grants an independent status to women. Neither is her identity lost in the identity of her husband, nor does she become his slave. Along with the new responsibilities that she handles after marriage, she obtains a new set of rights as well. Just as she cannot refuse to shoulder her responsibilities, so also, she cannot be refused her rights.

Let us see how Islam views the relation of a husband and a wife and what moral and legal foundations it provides for it....

1. The relation of a husband and wife is basically that of love and affection. The love, attraction and feelings that God has put in every couple's heart

[1] For further details, please refer Tahawi, Mushkil alAasaar: 2/270-273
[2] Ibn Qayyum: A'alaam alMuqeen: 4/273

has been explained in the following words of the Qur'an:

وَمِنْ اٰيٰتِهٖٓ اَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِّنْ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اَزْوَاجًا لِّتَسْكُنُوْٓا اِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَّوَدَّةً وَّرَحْمَةً ۭ اِنَّ فِيْ ذٰلِكَ لَاٰيٰتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَّتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ۝

"And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought." *[Surah aRum ayat 21]*

This ayat suggests that there should be a relation of love and affection, empathy and concern between a husband and his wife. This is their natural requirement. If love is replaced by hatred and enmity, then this would go against the innate nature that God has created them with.

2. Every institution- big or small- has a head that runs it. The relationships and issues of a family are much more complicated than that of any other institution. It cannot survive without a head. In the absence of a head and a manager, it would collapse like a pack of cards. Islam regards man as the head of the family on the basis of certain factors. This does not mean that man has been given a free rein over his wife or that she is his slave. Along with expecting women to honour and obey man, fulfil his lawful commands and keep the house well organized, she has also been granted certain rights. Man is duty bound to honour these rights. It has been mentioned in the Qur'an that:

اَلرِّجَالُ قَوّٰمُوْنَ عَلَي النِّسَاۗءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلٰي بَعْضٍ وَّبِمَآ اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْ اَمْوَالِهِمْ ۭ فَالصّٰلِحٰتُ قٰنِتٰتٌ حٰفِظٰتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللّٰهُ

"Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard."

[Surah anNisa' ayat 34]

By accepting the superiority of man in the family, the woman gets entitled to food, residence, *meher*, security, protection, education, grooming etc. If the man neglects these rights of hers, she can obtain them by taking legal steps for the same.

3. Islam has encouraged man to not only fulfil his wife's legal rights, but to treat her in the best possible manner at all times. At times, a person may dislike the appearance, attitude and mannerisms of his wife. This usually affects their relationship. At such times, a man should concentrate on her positive aspects. It might be that there is one aspect he dislikes, but there might also be ten other aspects that are praiseworthy. Hence, it is not just the call of virtue and grace, but also of wisdom and reason that man should keep in mind the greater benefit of the family and avoid spoiling the relationship. Man may detest a thing, but there might be many good things hidden therein. The standards that Islam has laid down in this regard can hardly be found anywhere else in this world:

وَعَاشِرُوْهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوْفِ ۚ فَاِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوْهُنَّ فَعَسٰٓى اَنْ تَكْرَهُوْا شَيْـًٔا وَّيَجْعَلَ اللّٰهُ فِيْهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيْرًا ﴿١٩﴾

"And live with them in kindness. For if you dislike them, perhaps you dislike a thing; and Allah makes therein much good." *[Surah anNisa' ayat 19]*

The way in which one should behave with his wife has been beautifully elucidated by the Prophet ﷺ. Mu'awiyah Qushairi (God be pleased with him) asked about the rights of wives, upon which the Prophet replied,

أَنْ تُطْعِمَهَا إِذَا طَعِمْتَ وَ تَكْسُوْهَا إِذَا اكْتَسَيْتَ وَ لَا تَضْرِبْ الْوَجْهَ وَلَا تُقَبِّحْ وَلَا تَهْجُرْ إِلَّا فِي الْبَيْتِ

"Feed her when you eat, clothe her when wear clothes, don't (lose your temper to) hit her on her face and don't criticize/rebuke her. (If it becomes necessary to distance yourself from her then) don't expel her from the house, but keep away from her in the house itself."[1]

The same Hadith has also been narrated using the following words:

اَطْعِمُوْهُنَّ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُوْنَ وَ اكْسُوْهُنَّ مِمَّا تَكْسُوْنَ وَلَا تَضْرِبُوْهُنَّ وَلَا تُقَبِّحُوْهُنَّ-

"Feed her what you eat yourself, clothe her with what you wear, don't hit them, nor rebuke them."[2]

We understand two things from these aHadith:

- The standards of food and clothing of a woman should be the same as that of her husband. It is not proper for a man to maintain a high standard of living for himself and compel her to lead an impoverished life.
- A man should behave decently with her, not with contempt or barbarism.

  If a person gets offended by his wife, the Prophet ﷺ has instructed him to bear it with patience. This is because this is usually a passing phase. If there is some act of hers that

[1] Abu Dawood: Kitaab alNikah Baab fi Haqq alMira'at ala Zaujaha.
[2] Abu Dawood: Kitaab alNikah Baab fi Haqq alMira'at ala Zaujaha.

has offended you, there might be some other thing in her that pleases your heart. Venting off one's anger and exhibiting sorrow or hatred on every occasion eventually ruins the relation. Abu Hurairah (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

لَا يَفْرَكْ مُؤْمِنٌ مُؤْمِنَةً اِنْ كَرِهَ مِنْهَا خُلُقًا رَضِيَ مِنْهَا اٰخَرَ۔

"A believer should not hate his wife. If he does not like one of her habits then he might like some other habit."[1]

At times, a person showcases his best character outside, but is extremely impolite when it comes to his wife, although it is his wife, his companion for life, who deserves his best behaviour. It has been mentioned in a Hadith that the best person is he who behaves with his wife in the best manner. Abu Hurairah (God be pleased with him) says that the Prophet ﷺ said:

اَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِيْمَانًا اَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا وَ خِيَارُكُمْ خِيَارُكُمْ لِنِسَائِهِمْ۔

"Of all the believers, the most complete faith is of that person who possesses the best morals, and the best among you are those that are best to their wives."[2]

In another Hadith, love and affection towards one's wife and kids is regarded as a quality that completes one's faith. Accordingly, Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her) narrates from the Prophet ﷺ that:

اِنَّ مِنْ اَكْمَلِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اِيْمَانًا اَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا وَاَلْطَفُهُمْ بِاَهْلِهٖ۔

"Of all the believers, the most complete faith is of that person who possesses the best morals and he who treats his wife and kids with love and affection."[3]

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[1] Muslim: Kitaab alRaza'a, Baab alWasiyah bilnisa'a.

[2] Tirmizi: Kitaab alRaza'a, Baab ma ja'a fi haqq almira'at ala zaujaha.

[3] Tirmizi: Kitaab alIman, Baab ma ja'a fi istakmal alIman.

Lady Aishah also narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

خَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِاَهلِهِ وَاَنَا خَيْرُكُمْ لِاَهْلِيْ-

"The best among you is he who is best towards his family, and even I am best towards my family."[1]

1. According to Islam, the standard form of relation between couples is that it should be free of tension and conflict. The wife should try to keep her husband happy and satisfied, obey him in lawful acts and safeguard his honour, prestige, wealth and property. The husband, on his part, should consider such a righteous wife a gift and treat her with utmost kindness.

Abu Hurairah (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ was asked about the qualities of a righteous and virtuous wife. The Prophet ﷺ replied,

اَلَّتِيْ تَسُرُّهُ اِذَا نَظَرَ وَتُطِيْعُهُ اِذَا اَمَرَ وَلَا تُخَالِفُهُ فِيْ مَا يَكْرَهُ فِيْ نَفْسِهَا وَمَالِهِ-

"She should please her husband when he looks at her, obey him if he instructs her to do something and safeguard her honour and his wealth and refrain from adopting an attitude in their regard that would offend him."[2]

Abu Umamah (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

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[1] Tirmizi: Kitaab alMunaqib, Baab Fadhl Azwaaj alNabi ﷺ and Ibn Majah through Ibn Abbas in Kitaab alNikah, Baab Hasan ma'ashrah alNisa'.

[2] Musnad Ahmad: Musnad Abu Hurairah, Hadith # 7373. Nisai, Kitaab alNikah Baab Aiyi anNisa' khair.

مَا اسْتَفَادَ الْمُؤْمِنُ بَعْدَ تَقْوىٰ اللّٰهِ خَيْرًا لَهٗ مِنْ زَوْجَةٍ صَالِحَةٍ اِنْ اَمَرَهَا اَطَاعَتْه وَاِنْ نَظَرَ اِلَيْهَا سَرَّتْهُ وَاِن اقْسَمَ عَلَيْهَا اَبَرَّتْهُ وَاِنْ غَابَ عَنْهَا نَصَحَتْهُ فِيْ نَفْسِهَا وَمَالِهٖ۔

"After the fear of God, a believer does not benefit from anything more than a righteous wife...a wife who obeys his commands, fills him with happiness when he beholds her, fulfils the things told to her and remains concerned about her own self and his wealth in his absence."[1]

Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

اَلدُّنْيَا مَتَاعٌ وَ خَيْرُ مَتَاعِهَا اَلْمَرْاَ ةُ الصَّالِحَةُ۔

"This world is a provision to spend one's life, of which the best provision is a righteous wife."[2]

Umar (God be pleased with him) once asked the Prophet ﷺ: God has forbidden us from hoarding gold and silver. Then what kind of wealth should we keep? The Prophet ﷺ replied,

لِيَتَّخِذْ اَحَدُ كُمْ قَلْبًا شَاكِرًا وَ لِسَانًا ذَاكِرًا وَ زَوْجَةً مُؤْمِنَةً تُعِيْنُ اَحَدَكُمْ عَلٰى اَمْرِ الْاٰخِرَةِ۔

"Each of you should keep a grateful heart, a tongue that remembers God and a believing wife who assists him in deeds related to the hereafter (this is the greatest wealth)."[3]

From these ayaat and aHadith, we come to know what kind of relation Islam expects between a man and his wife. If there do exist such relations between them, they would prove to be each others' helpers and

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[1] Ibn Majah: Kitaab alNikah, Baab Afzal anNisa'.

[2] Muslim: Kitaab alRaza'a, Baab alWasiyatah binNisa'. Ibn Majah: Kitaab alNikah, Baab Afzal anNisa'.

[3] Tirmizi: Kitaab alTafseer (Surah atTaubah). Ibn Majah, Kitaab alNikah, Baab Afzal alNisa'.

complement each other, their lives would be happy and ideal and there would never arise those turbulent disputes of rights and authority that lead to the collapse of family life.

Love for the Daughter

In pre-Islamic times, sons used to be considered an asset. Their numbers used to be prided upon because they used to increase the strength of the tribe and help them with their financial pursuits. Girls, however, were a burden and liability for the Arabs. They used to look down upon them with disdain, with even their mention being a cause of embarrassment. The Qur'an depicts their attitude towards daughters in the following manner:

وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُمْ بِالْأُنْثَىٰ ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ ۝ يَتَوَارَىٰ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِنْ سُوءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهِ ۚ أَيُمْسِكُهُ عَلَىٰ هُونٍ أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي التُّرَابِ ۗ

"And when one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief. He hides himself from the people because of the ill of which he has been informed. Should he keep it in humiliation or bury it in the ground? Unquestionably, evil is what they decide." [Surah anNahl ayaat 58-59]

Because of this detest towards them, certain tribes used to bury their daughters alive. The Qur'an has reprimanded such behaviour in the strongest possible terms. It declared that killing one's child is a grave offence and completely abolished this abominable practice. It has said that they would be held accountable for this stone-heartedness before God on the Day of Judgment:

وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ ۝ بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ ۝

"And when the girl [who was] buried alive is asked For what crime she was killed"

[Surah atTakweer ayaat 8-9]

Islam has turned this perspective over its head and infused diagonally opposite feelings for the girl child....

1. The first thing that Islam said was that it was God's prerogative to bless people with children or to keep them childless. Moreover, He grants only sons to some people, only daughters to some others and both sons and daughters to certain other couples. None of these conditions should be taken as means of honour or means of humiliation and shame. All these are manifestations of God's power and a result of His infinite knowledge and wisdom that we might not be able to encompass. Those who take them to be standards of one's honour or humiliation are actually raising a finger at His wisdom. God says,

لِلّٰهِ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَآءُ ۚ يَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ اِنَاثًا وَّيَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ الذُّكُوْرَ ۝ اَوْ يُزَوِّجُهُمْ ذُكْرَانًا وَّاِنَاثًا ۚ وَيَجْعَلُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ عَقِيْمًا ۚ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌ قَدِيْرٌ ۝

"To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; He creates what He wills. He gives to whom He wills daughters and He gives to whom He wills sons. Or He gives them both sons and daughters, and He renders whom He wills barren. Indeed He is Knowing and Competent." [Surah ashShura ayaat 49-50]

2. People were encouraged to raise daughters. It was declared a virtuous act and a great way of attaining Paradise. Lady Aishah narrates that the Prophet ﷺ has said,

مَنْ بُلِيَ مِنْ هٰذِهِ الْبَنَاتِ شَيْئًا فَاَحْسَنَ اِلَيْهِنَّ كُنَّ لَه سِتْرا من النارِ۔

"Whoever God tries through these daughters and he treats them kindly, they would be a means of protecting him against the fire of Hell."[1]

The Prophet ﷺ has conveyed glad tidings of Paradise for nurturing two, three and even a single daughter. We can imagine the rewards of that person who is given more than three daughters under his care. Uqbah bin Aamir (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

مَنْ كَانَتْ لَهُ ثَلَاثُ بَنَاتٍ فَصَبَرَ عَلَيْهِنَّ فَاَطْعَمَهُنَّ وَسَقَاهُنَّ وَ كَسَاهُنَّ مِنْ جِدَّتِهِ كُنَّ لَهُ حِجَابًا مِّنَ النَّارِ۔

"He who has three daughters and he patiently endures the difficulties he might face in their upbringing and feeds and clothes them from his hard-earned money, then they would shield him from the fire of Hell."[2]

Abdullah ibn Abbas (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

مَنْ عَالَ جَارِيَتَيْنِ حَتّٰى تَبْلُغَا جَاءَ يُوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ اَنَا وَهُوَ هٰكَذَا۔

"He who raises two daughters until they come of age would accompany me on the Day of Judgment in this manner."

Saying so, he joined his two fingers together.[3]

Abu Hurairah (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

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[1] Bukhari: Kitaab alAdab, Baab Rahmatul Walad wa Taqbeelah.... Muslim: Kitaab alBirr wassilah, Baab Fazl alIhsaan ilal Banaat.

[2] Musnad Ahmad: Hadith Uqbah bin Aamir, Hadith # 16950. Ibn Majah: Kitaab alAdab, Baab Birre alWalid wal Ihsaan ilal Banaat.

[3] Muslim: Kitaab alBirr wassilah, Baab ma ja'a fi alNufqatah alal Banaat.

مَنْ كُنَّ لَهُ ثَلَاثُ بَنَاتٍ فَصَبَرَ عَلٰى لَاوائِهِنَّ وَ ضرَّائهن اَدْخَلَهُ اللهُ الْجَنَّةَ بِرَحْمَتِهِ ايَاهن قَالَ: فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ وَابْنَتَانِ يا رسول الله؟ قال وان ابنتان قَالَ رَجُلٌ يَا رسُولَ اللهِ وَ وَاحِدَة؟ قَالَ: و وَاحِدَة۔

"He who has three daughters and endures with patience the difficulties and financial burden involved in their upbringing, then because of this empathy that he has for them, God would grant him Paradise". At this, a person asked, "O messenger of God ﷺ, what if a person has only two daughters (and he patiently endures the difficulties in their regard?). The Prophet replied, "(God would grant him Paradise) even if he has two daughters". A person enquired, "What if he has only one daughter?" The Prophet ﷺ said, "Even if he has one daughter".[1]

3. People have also been encouraged to look into the education and grooming of their daughters, seek a suitable groom for them and continue being kind to them even after they get married. Abu Saeed Khudri (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

مَنْ عَالَ ثَلاثَ بَنَاتٍ فَاَدَّبَهُنَّ وَ زَوَّجَهُنَّ وَاَحْسَنَ اِلَيْهِنَّ فَلَهُ الْجَنَّةُ۔

"He who has raised three daughters, educated and groomed them, married them off and continued being kind to them (even after their marriage) would be granted Paradise."[2]

4. Usually, it is the sons who are loved more than the daughters. They are given preferential treatment in matters of food, clothing, medical treatment, education, grooming etc. This is a grave injustice and such a biased treatment has been condemned in the aHadith. Abdullah ibn Abbas (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

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[1] Hakim: alMustadrak, Kitaab alBirr wassilah, Hadith # 7346. 4/195.
[2] Abu Dawood, Kitaab alAdab, Baab Fazl mann aal yatama.

مَنْ كَانَتْ لَهُ أُنْثٰى فَلَمْ يَئِدْهَا وَلَمْ يُهِنْهَا وَلَمْ يُؤْثِرْ وَلَدَهُ عَلَيْهَا يَعْنِي الذُّكُوْرَ اَدْخَلَهُ اللّٰهُ الْجَنَّةَ۔

"God would admit the person to Paradise who neither buries his daughter alive, nor treats her with contempt nor prefers his son over her."[1]

In these aHadith a reward of Paradise and protection from hellfire has been promised for the act of raising daughters, nurturing them, educating and grooming them and marrying them off and being unprejudiced towards them. A person who has no faith in God and the Day of Judgment and considers this world as the end objective of all his pursuits would never understand the importance of this glad tiding. On the contrary, this glad tiding is all that a believer needs, whose ultimate objective is nothing but Paradise.

Along with this, it has also been imbibed in people's minds that unlike what the world presumes, daughters are not worthless or unimportant. Rather, they are a precious gift of nature. The love and affection that is found in them cannot be found in sons. Uqbah bin Aamir (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

لَا تَكْرَهُوا الْبَنَاتِ فَاِنَّهُنَّ الْمُؤْنِسَاتُ الْغَالِيَاتُ۔

"Do not hate girls. They are very empathetic and precious."[2]

Such guidelines regarding good treatment of daughters cannot be found anywhere else. As per Islamic law, if the child is not financially well-off and

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[1] Abu Dawood: Kitaab alAdab, Baab Fazl mann aal yatama. alHakim: alMustadrak, Kitaab alBirr wassilah, Hadith # 7348.

[2] Musnad Ahmad: Hadith Uqbah bin Aamir, Hadith # 16922. alTaiseer Bisharah alJamae alSagheer: 2/498.

if he does not have any source of income, then it is incumbent upon the father to provide for him. In the same manner, it is also incumbent upon him to provide for his daughters. Until the daughter is married off, her provisions would be taken care of by her father; and if the father is not present, it is incumbent upon her closest relative to provide for her. After her marriage, this responsibility is taken up by her husband. If her husband passes away or divorces her, and if she is not financially independent, then it is incumbent upon her children, her father and her closest relative (in that order) to take care of her. This is her legal right and doing so is said to be a very virtuous deed in the aHadith.

Suraqah bin Malik (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ once asked him:

أَلَا أَدُلُّكَ عَلَىٰ اعظَمِ الصَّدَقَةِ۔

"Should I not tell you what the greatest form of charity is?"

He submitted, "Yes, please tell me O Messenger ﷺ." The Prophet told him,

اِبْنَتُكَ مَرْدُوْدَةٌ اِلَيْكَ لَيْسَ لَهَا كَاسِبٌ غَيْرُكَ۔

"The greatest form of charity is to mete out good treatment to your daughter who (because of being divorced or widowed) has been returned to you and there is no one except you who would provide for her."[1]

We can get an idea of the extent to which the companions used to take care of their divorced and widowed daughters from the case of Zubair (God be

[1] Musnad Ahmad: Hadith Suraqa bin Malik, 17136. Ibn Majah, Kitaab alAdab, Baab Birr alWalid wa alIhsan ilal Banat. Hakim: alMustadrak, Kitaab alBirr wassilah. Hadith # 7345.

pleased with him) who had dedicated some of his properties. The details of this deed include:

لِلْمَرْدُوْدَةِ مِنْ بَنَاتِهِ اَنْ تَسْكُنَ غَيْرَ مُضِرَّةٍ وَّلَا مُضَرٌّ بِهَا فَاِنِ اسْتَغْنَتْ بِزَوْجٍ فَلَيْسَ لَهَا حَقٌّ۔

"Those of his daughters who would be returned to him (because of getting divorced or widowed) would stay in those apartments. Neither would she harm, nor be harmed. Then, if she becomes independent of that property because of her husband, she would no longer be entitled to it."[1]

Good treatment towards one's sister:

A woman is also a sister. She shares a blood relation with her brother and they both have natural feelings of love and affection for each other. It is considered to be an ideal relation. However, its importance is not given due consideration in the family. Islam has strengthened this relationship. There are times when a sister stands in need of her brother's assistance. Helping her out is a very virtuous deed, one that can lead a person to Paradise. In the Hadith, we have been encouraged to raise, nurture, educate, groom and marry off our sisters just as we have been told to do so about our daughters.

Abu Saeed Khudri (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

لَايَكُوْنُ لِاَحَدِكُمْ ثَلَاثُ بَنَاتٍ اَوْثَلَاثُ اَخَوَاتٍ فَيُحْسِنُ إِلَيْهِنَّ اِلَّا دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ۔

"A person who has three daughters or three sisters and he treats them well would definitely enter paradise."[2]

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[1] Bukhari: Kitaab alWasaya, Baab iza Waqf Arza au Bara'a wa Ishtarat....

[2] Tirmizi: Kitaab alBirr wassilah, Baab ma ja'a fi alnufqata alalbanaat.

In another narration of Abu Saeed Khudri, the same reward has been mentioned with regards to the good treatment of two daughters and sisters. He narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

مَنْ كَانَتْ لَهُ ثَلَاثُ بَنٰتٍ اَوْ ثَلَاثُ اَخَوَاتٍ اَوْ اِبْنَتَانِ اَوْ اُخْتَانِ فَاَحْسَنَ صُحْبَتَهُنَّ وَ اتَّقَى اللّٰهَ فِيْهِنَّ فَلَهُ الْجَنَّةُ۔

"A person who has three daughters or three sisters or two daughters or two sisters and he behaves kindly with them and fears God concerning them would be granted Paradise."[1]

In a narration, we have been given the good news that looking after and providing for daughters and sisters would entitle one to the company of the Prophet ﷺ in Paradise.

مَنْ عَالَ اِبْنَتَيْنِ اَوْ ثَلَاثَ بَنَاتٍ اَوْ اُخْتَيْنِ اَوْثَلَاثَ اَخَوَاتٍ حَتّٰى يَمُتْنَ اَوْ يَمُوْتُ عَنْهُنَّ كُنْتُ اَنَا وَ هُوَ هَاتَيْنِ وَ اَشَارَ بِاِصْبَعَيْهِ السَّبَّابَةِ وَالْوُسْطٰى۔

"He who raises two or three daughter or two or three sisters to the point that they pass away or he himself passes away would be with me in Paradise in such a manner. Saying so, the Prophet gestured with his index and middle finger."[2]

Abdullah ibn Abbas (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

مَنْ عَالَ ثَلَاثَ بَنَاتٍ اَوْ مِثْلَهُنَّ مِنَ الْاَخَوَاتِ فَاَدَّبَهُنَّ وَ رَحِمَهُنَّ حَتّٰى يُغْنِيَهُنَّ اللّٰهُ اَوْجَبَ اللّٰهُ لَهُ الْجَنَّةَ۔

"If a person raises three daughters or three sisters, teaches them morals and etiquettes, treats them with love and kindness, to the point that God makes them independent of him, God would make Paradise incumbent for him."

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[1] Ibid

[2] Musnad Ahmad: Musnad Anas bin Malik, Hadith # 12089.

Hearing this, one person enquired, O messenger of God, if a person metes out the same treatment with two daughters or sisters, would he get the same reward? The Prophet replied, "Yes, the same reward is assured in case of two daughters/sisters."

The narrator adds that the Prophet would have given the same reply had he been asked about a single daughter/sister.[1]

This Hadith tells us that a person becomes eligible for Paradise even if he raises, educates and grooms a single daughter or sister. If he shoulders the burden of more than one, then it is expected that he would attain higher ranks in Paradise.

A man is not as emotionally attached to his sister as he is attached to his daughter. Hence, he does not show as much concern for her. These aHadith tell us that the rewards that have been promised for the kind treatment and provision of sisters are the same as those promised in relation to one's daughters. Hence, a person should harbour the same feelings for his sister as he harbours for his daughter. We can get an idea of the effects of this teaching by a small example:

When Abdullah bin Haram Ansari (God be pleased with him) decided to participate in the Battle of Uhud, he told his son, Jabir (God be pleased with him): "O my son! I feel that I would be among the first to be martyred in this battle. I have a loan pending upon me. Please repay it after I have died. I also enjoin upon you to treat your sisters well."[2]

At that time, Jabir was a young man. Despite this, he married a widow. Seeing his age, the Prophet ﷺ

[1] Mishkat alMusabeeh: Kitaab alAadaab, Baab filBirr wassilah.
[2] Ibn Atheer alJuzari, Usd alGhabah: 3/344.

asked him,

هَلَّا جَارِيَةً تُلَاعِبُهَا وَتُلَاعِبُكَ وَتُضَاحِكُهَا وَتُضَاحِكُكَ۔

"Why did you not marry a young woman so that the two of you could have enjoyed each other's company-played with each other and amused each other?"

Jabir (God be pleased with him) replied,

يَا رَسُوْلَ اللّٰهِ اِنَّ اَبِیْ قُتِلَ يَوْمَ اُحُدٍ وَ تَرَکَ تِسْعَ بَنَاتٍ كُنَّ لِیْ تِسْعَ اَخَوَاتٍ فَكَرِهْتُ اَنْ اَجْمَعَ اِلَيْهِنَّ جَارِيَةً خَرْقَاءَ مِثْلَهُنَّ وَلٰكِنَّ إِمْرَأَةً تَمْشِطُهُنَّ وَتَقُوْمُ عَلَيْهِنَّ قَالَ اَصَبْتَ۔

"O messenger of God! My father was martyred in the Battle of Uhud and has left behind nine daughters, who are my nine sisters. It is for the sake of their upbringing that I did not find it suitable to join them with a woman who would be as inexperienced as they are. Hence, I chose to marry a lady who would be able to cater to their mundane needs and take care of them."

The Prophet (appreciated his decision and) said, "You have done the right thing."[1]

This was actually a wonder of Islamic teachings that a young man who had desires bubbling in his heart and whose age and prime aspired a young lady as his companion married a lady whom his youthful desires could hardly accept, just for the sake of his sisters.

It is very easy to tell your sister that you love her, but it is difficult to sacrifice so much for her if your heart is bereft of the desire for God's pleasure and faith in the Hereafter.

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[1] *Bukhari: Kitaab alMaghazi and Kitaab alNufqaat. Muslim: Kitaab alRaza'a, Baab Istahbaab Nikah alBakr.*

The History of Muslim Women
(A Legacy of Faith and Worship)

A lot is being said about the 'progress' women have made these days. However, she has had to pay a huge price of this 'progress'. This progress has ravaged families and beautified markets. The foundation of this edifice has been laid on the ruins of home and family. In sharp contrast, Muslim ladies fulfilled the promise they had made to God and strengthened their spiritual relations with Him by faithfully discharging their domestic duties towards their families. At the same time, they have left indelible marks in the academic, social and political fields. In this chapter, we would discuss their religious steadfastness and their attachment to acts of worship.

The first amongst the believers

Islamic history has been sculpted by both- men as well as women. If the role of women is omitted from history, the narrative would remain incomplete and weak. When the Prophet invited people towards Islam, the women were as forthcoming in accepting his call as the men were. They left their homes, were separated from their near and dear ones and endured all forms of difficulties for Islam. They showed insurmountable resilience in the wake of hostilities, sacrificed their lives, their wealth and kept beseeching God for accepting their deeds and forgiving their faults. God

listened to their prayers and gave them glad tidings of Paradise. He said that women were as eligible of His love and good pleasure as the men were. He says,

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنثَىٰ ۖ بَعْضُكُم مِّن بَعْضٍ ۖ فَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَأُخْرِجُوا مِن دِيَارِهِمْ وَأُوذُوا فِي سَبِيلِي وَقَاتَلُوا وَقُتِلُوا لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ثَوَابًا مِّنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عِندَهُ حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ ﴿١٩٥﴾

"And their Lord responded to them, 'Never will I allow to be lost the work of (any) worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another. So those who emigrated or were evicted from their homes or were harmed in My cause or fought or were killed- I will surely remove from them their misdeeds, and I will surely admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow as reward from Allah, and Allah has with Him the best reward." *[Surah Aal-e-Imran ayat 195]*

Lady Khadijah (God be pleased with her) accepted Islam as soon as the Prophet ﷺ announced his prophethood. Thus, the first person to accept Islam was a woman. Allamah Ibn Atheer writes:

أَوَّلُ خَلْقِ اللّٰهِ أَسْلَمَ بِإِجْمَاعِ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ لَمْ يَتَقَدَّمْهَا رَجُلٌ وَلَا اِمْرَأَةٌ۔

"She was the first person to accept Islam. The Muslims are unanimous in this matter. No man or woman preceded her in accepting Islam."[1]

Imam Zahabi has included all those people who accepted Islam before Umar and Hamza (God be pleased with them) in the list of *asSabiqoon alAwwaloon* (the first among the believers). This list has 51 people, which also includes the following women: Khadijah, Asma'a bint Abu Bakr, Asma'a bint Salamah, Asma'a bint Amees, Fatimah bint alMujallil, Fakha bint Yasar,

[1] Ibn alAtheer alJazari, Usd alGhaba fi Ma'arafatul Sahabah: 7/80.

Ramalah bint Abi Auf and Ameenah bint Khalf[1] (God be pleased with them all).

Steadfastness

Those people who used to respond to the call of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and accept Islam in Makkah used to be terribly prosecuted. Since the slaves and bondswomen had no one to protect them, they had to bear the maximum torture. The very narration of the treatment meted out to them sends chills down one's spine. Despite this, history stands witness to their steadfast spirit and forbearance; none of them showed any weakness in their commitment towards Islam.

The family of Ammar bin Yasir (God be pleased with them) was one of those courageous and privileged people who were among the first to accept Islam. The members of this family were made to lie on the burning afternoon sand. Whenever the Prophet ﷺ used to pass by them, he used to encourage them to bear the injustice with patience and used to reassure them that they would meet him in Paradise. The name of Ammar's mother was Sumaiyah. She was the bondswoman of Abu Huzaifah bin Mughirah. She had grown old and weak. This poor soul was tortured in all possible ways, but none of these tortures were able to turn her away from her faith. Frustrated by her resilience, Abu Jahl took a spear one day and pierced it in her private parts. This was the first case of a person getting martyred for having believed in the prophethood of Muhammad ﷺ. Mujahid states,

اَوَّلُ شَهِيْدٍ اُسْتُشْهِدَ فِى الْاِسْلَامِ سُمَيَّةُ اُمُّ عَمَّارٍ۔

[1] Zahabi: Seer A'alaam alNabla'a: 10/99-101.

"Sumaiyah, the mother of Ammar, is the first person to be martyred in (the cause of) Islam."[1]

Zunairah (God be pleased with her) was a Roman slave girl. She was subjected to the worst of torments after having accepted Islam. Finally, Abu Bakr (God be pleased with him) purchased her and set her free. During the course of this torture, she lost her eyesight. The pagans started taunting her that it was Laat and Uzza (their deities) who had blinded her. But this did not affect the faith of this lady in the very least. She said, "You have lied. Laat and Uzza are incapable of benefitting or harming anyone." God was so pleased with her reply that she regained her eyesight.[2]

A slave girl of Bani Mua'mal had embraced Islam at a time when Umar (God be pleased with him) had not yet become a Muslim. Umar used to subject her to severe tortures to force her to give up her faith. When he used to get exhausted, he used to remind her that 'Don't you think you have been spared. Let me rest a bit before I teach you a lesson'. However, Umar's castigations could not turn her away from Islam. All she used to reply was, 'May God treat you in kind'. She was finally relived of this torture when Abu Bakr (God be pleased with him) bought her and set her free.

[Ibn Hisham, asSeerat anNabwiyah: 1/653]

Allamah Ibn Abdul Birr writes: The name of Bilal's mother was Hamamah (God be pleased with them). She was also tortured for having accepted Islam like

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[1] Ibn Saad: alTabqaat alKubra: 8/264-265

[2] Ibn Hisham: asSeerat anNabwiyah: 1/355. Ibn Atheer: Usd alGhaba: 7/124. Ibn Hajr alIsabah fi Tamyeez alSahabah: 8/150-151

her son. She was one of those who were purchased and set free by Abu Bakr (God be pleased with him).[1]

Umme Ubais (God be pleased with her) was the bondswoman of Banu Tameem bin Marrah or Banu Zahrah. She was also being severely tortured for having accepted Islam. Abu Bakr (God be pleased with him) purchased her and set her free.[2]

Hawa'a bint Zaid bin Sakan (God be pleased with her) had accepted Islam in Madinah many years before the Prophet's migration to Madinah. However, her husband, Qais bin Hateem had not accepted Islam and used to treat her very harshly. She used to bear this with patience. The Prophet ﷺ was informed about her in Makkah. The Prophet met her husband when he had come for the ZulMajaz fair and invited him to Islam, but he refused. The Prophet told him that, 'I have been informed that you have been mistreating your wife ever since she has left your cult. Fear God. Hearken to my words and do not show contempt. He promised that he would stop troubling his wife. When he returned home, he narrated the episode of his meeting with the Prophet to his wife and allowed her to practice her faith, assuring her that he would not show any contempt towards her.[3]

Lady Umme Habeebah bint Abi Sufiyan (God be pleased with her) and her husband, Abdullah bin Jahash accepted Islam in the early days and migrated to Abyssinia. However, her husband adopted Christianity

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[1] Ibn Abdul Birr, alAstiaab: 4/872. Ibn Atheer, Usd alGhba 7/17. Ibn Hajr alIsabah: 8/88

[2] Ibn Hisham, asSeerat anNabwiyah 1/355. Ibn Hajr, alIsabah fi Tamyeez alSahabah: 8/434

[3] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaaat alKubra: 8/323,324. There is some dispute over the ancestry of the couple. Usd alGhaba:7/75,76

over there. Being in a foreign land, this was a very big trial for her. She, however, remained steadfast on Islam. After this, the Prophet ﷺ sent her a marriage proposal and she was thus married to him.[1]

The Spirit of Worship:

Worship is the very soul of religion. It is a manifestation of a devotee's relation with God, and this relation is strengthened with regular worship. Any negligence in worship renders this relation weak and feeble, to the point that it may even break off if left unheeded. The ladies of the early period of Islam were very conscious of their acts of worship. The Mothers of the believers led from the front in this case.

Lady Umme Salamah (God be pleased with her) narrates the following about Lady Zainab bint Jahash (God be pleased with her):

كَانَتْ اِمْرَأَةً صَالِحَةً صَوَّامَةً قَوَّامَةً۔

"She was righteous, used to fast often and spend her nights in prayer."[2]

Lady Aishah's opinion about her is as follows:

مَا رَأَيْتُ اِمْرَأَةً قَطُّ خَيْرً فِي الدِّيْنِ مِنْ زَيْنَبَ وَاَتْقٰى لِلّٰهِ وَ اَصْدَقَ حَدِيْثًا وَ اَوْصَلَ لِلرَّحِمِ وَ اَعْظَمَ صَدَقَةً۔

"I have never seen a lady better in deen than her in terms of piety, truthfulness, treatment to relatives and charity."[3]

On one occasion, the Prophet ﷺ has himself testified to her righteousness and piety. He had told Umar (God be pleased with him):

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[1] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/96-97. Ibn Atheer Juzri, Usd alGhaba: 7/303

[2] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/103

[3] Ibn Abdul Birr, alAstiaab fi Asma'a alAshaab: 4/407

إِنَّ زَيْنَبَ بِنْتَ جَحْشٍ أَوَّاهَةٌ۔

"Zainab bint Jahash is a humble and pious lady."[1]

Observance of Prayers:

The most important act of worship is prayer (*salaat*) and it has certain prerequisites and etiquettes without the fulfillment of which neither can justice be done to it, nor can anyone gather its complete blessings. One of the conditions for prayers is that it should be offered on time. A lady from Madinah, Umme Anas (God be pleased with her) told the Prophet ﷺ that she starts getting drowsy before *isha* (because of which there is a possibility of the prayers getting missed). The Prophet replied, "O Umme Anas, offer the prayers sooner. The time for *isha* begins when the darkness of night sets in. Offer your prayers at that time; it would not be a sin to do so."[2]

This shows us how diligent she was with her prayers. She was worried about missing out on her prayers.

Maimoon bin Mahran says that whenever I used to go visit Umme Darda (God be pleased with her) I have always found her engrossed in prayers.[3]

Participation in the Congregation:

It is not necessary for ladies to offer their prayers in a masjid as part of the congregation. It is better for them to offer their prayers at home. However, there are many benefits of participating in a congregation. Ladies may offer their prayers in the masjid if it is

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[1] Ibn Abdul Birr, alAstiaab fi Asma'a alAshaab: 4/408

[2] Ibn Atheer Juzri, Usd alGhaba: 7/289. Ibn Hajar, alIsabah: 8/357

[3] Nawawi, Tehzeeb alAsma'a wa alLugaat: 2/361

feasible for them to do so and there is no apprehension of any moral corruption in doing so. This is why Islam has adopted a balanced stand- it has told ladies that it is better for them to offer their prayers at home and it has asked men not to prevent their ladies from going to the masjid against their wishes. Abdullah ibn Umar narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

إِذَا اسْتَأْذَنَتْ اَحَدَكُمْ اِمْرَأَتُهُ اِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ فَلَا يَمْنَعُهَا۔

"If any of your women asks you permission to visit the masjid, do not deny her."[1]

The same Hadith has been narrated in the following words:

لَا تَمْنَعُوْا النِّسَاءَ حُظُوْظَهُنَّ مِنَ الْمَسَاجِدِ۔

"Do not deny ladies their share in the masjid."[2]

Another Hadith says:

لَا تَمْنَعُوْا نِسَاءَ كُمْ الْمَسَاجِدَ وَبُيُوْتُهُنَّ خَيْرٌ لَّهُنَّ۔

"Do not prevent your women from visiting the masjid, though their homes are better for them."[3]

This permission primarily relates to the *fajr* and *isha* prayers, because the same Hadith has been narrated in these words as well:

إِذَا اسْتَأْذَنَكُمْ نِسَاؤُكُمْ بِالَّيْلِ اِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ فَأْذَنُوْهُنَّ۔

"If your women seek your permission to visit the masjid during the night, grant them permission to do so."[4]

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[1] Bukhari: Kitaab alAzaan, Baab Istaizan alMirat Zaujaha. Muslim: Kitaab asSalaat, Baab Khurooj anNisa' ilal masajid.

[2] Muslim: Kitaab asSalaat, Baab Khurooj anNisa' ilal masjid.

[3] Abu Dawood, Kitaab asSalaat, Baab ma ja'a fi Khurooj anNisa' ilal masjid.

[4] Bukhari: Kitaab alAzaan, Baab Khurooj anNisa'ilal masajid. Muslim: Kitaab asSalaat, Baab Khurooj annisa' ilal masajid.

This tells us that during the age of the Prophet ﷺ, ladies were allowed to attend the congregation, especially during *fajr* and *isha*. We also know that they used to indeed participate in these prayers. A few narrations in this regard have been reproduced below:

1. Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her) says that:

   اِنْ كَانَ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهِ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَيُصَلِّيَ الصُّبْحَ فَتَنْصَرِفُ النِّسَاءُ مُتَلَفِّعَاتٍ بِمُرُوْطِهِنَّ مَا يُعْرَفْنَ مِنَ الْغَلَسِ۔

   "It used to be so dark when the Prophet ﷺ used to lead the fajr prayers that no one could recognize the ladies as they returned home wrapped up in their sheets."[1]

2. Lady Umme Salmah (God be pleased with her) narrates that:

   اِنَّ النِّسَاءَ فِيْ عَهْدِ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ كُنَّ اِذَا سَلَّمْنَ مِنَ الْمَكْتُوْبَةِ قُمْنَ وَثَبَتَ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ صَلَّى اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَمَنْ صَلّٰى مِنَ الرِّجَالِ مَاشَاءَ اللّٰهُ فَاِذَا قَامَ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ قَامَ الرِّجَالُ۔

   "During the time of the Prophet ﷺ, the ladies used to vacate the masjid as soon as the obligatory prayers were offered, while the Prophet and his male companions used to remain seated in the masjid for as long as God wished them to do so (waiting for the ladies to vacate). When the Prophet used to stand up, they used to follow suit."[2]

3. Abu Qatadah Ansari (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

   اِنِّيْ لَأَقُوْمُ اِلَى الصَّلٰوةِ وَاَنَا اُرِيْدُ اَنْ اُطَوِّلَ فِيْهَا فَاَسْمَعُ بُكَاءَ الصَّبِيِّ فَاَتَجَوَّزُ فِيْ صَلَاتِيْ كَرَاهِيَةَ اَنْ اَشُقَّ عَلٰى اُمِّهٖ۔

   "When I stand up to lead the prayers, I feel like having a long recitation. But then I hear some child crying

[1] Bukhari: Kitaab alAzan, Baab Khurooj anNisa' ilal masajid. Muslim: Kitaab alMasajid, Baab Istahbaab alTakbeer bisSubh.

[2] Bukhari: Kitaab alAzan, Baab Khurooj anNisa' ilal Masajid bilLail.

and shorten the prayers: It does not seem right to place the child's mother in a difficulty."[1]

4. Once it so happened that the *isha* prayers got too delayed because the Prophet ﷺ had not come out of his house. In order to convey this to him, Umar (God be pleased with him) uttered aloud that the women and children have fallen asleep. Hearing this, the Prophet came out to lead the prayers.[2]
5. Zainab alThaqfiyah narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

إِذَا شَهِدَتْ إِحْدَاكُنَّ الْعِشَاءَ فَلَاتُطَيِّبْ تِلْكَ اللَّيْلَةَ۔

"If any lady amongst you participates in the isha prayers, then she should avoid applying perfume that night."[3]

The same narration owes its source to Abu Hurairah (God be pleased with him), albeit in the following words:

أَيُّمَا إِمْرَأَةٌ أَصَابَتْ بُخُوْرًا فَلَا تَشْهَدْ مَعَنَا الْعِشَاءَ الْأٰخِرَةَ۔

"The woman who has applied perfume should not accompany us in the isha prayers."[4]

These narrations tell us that ladies used to visit the masajid for the fajr and isha congregational prayers. It might be possible that usually only the elderly ladies used to participate in these prayers. Umme Salmah bint Abu Hakeem (God be pleased with her) narrates that, "I have seen elderly ladies offering their obligatory prayers behind the Prophet ﷺ."[5]

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[1] Ibid.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Muslim: Kitaab asSalaat, Baab Khurooj anNisa' ilal masajid.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibn Abdul Birr alIstiaab fi Asma'a alAshaab: 4/49. Ibn Hajar, alIsabah: 8/410-411. Ibn Atheer alJuzari, Usd alGhaba: 7/331.

Remembrance of God and chanting His name:

The Prophet has encouraged women to supplicate to God and chant His name in His remembrance. Yasirah bint Yasir (God be pleased with her) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

عَلَيْكُنَّ بِالتَّسْبِيْحِ وَالتَّهْلِيْلِ وَالتَّقْدِيْسِ وَ اَعْقِدْنَ بِالْاَنَامِلِ فَاِنَّهُنَّ مَسْئُوْلَاتٌ مُسْتَنْطِقَاتٌ وَلَا تَغْفَلْنَ فَتَنْسِيْنَ الرَّحْمَةَ۔

"O ladies! Make it binding upon you to chant the glory of God (subhanAllah), His Oneness (la ilaha illallah) and his purity. Count them on the tips of your fingers, for the fingers would also be asked to testify. Do not be neglectful of the remembrance of God, lest you be deprived of God's mercy."[1]

On certain occasions, the Prophet ﷺ has also instructed ladies to recite certain words. Ali (God be pleased with him) narrates that Lady Fatimah (God be pleased with her) did not have any servant to help her. She used to do all the housework herself. Her hands had developed lesions grinding the flour. Once, it so happened that some slaves were brought to the Prophet ﷺ. She went to him to relate her problems and ask him to grant her a slave. He was not at home, so she conveyed it to Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her) and returned home. Lady Aishah told the Prophet about Lady Fatimah's visit and her needs. The Prophet visited us in the night. We had already reclined, but sat up to welcome him. He insisted that we keep lying and sat between us such that his foot touched my chest and I could feel its coolness. The Prophet said, "Should I tell you of something better than what you have requested for? When you recline on your bed, recite

[1] Tirmizi: Kitaab adDa'awaat, Baab ma ja'a fi atTasbeeh. Abu Dawood, Kitaab alWitr, Baab atTasbeeh bilHasaa.

SubhanAllah 33 times, *Alhamdulillah* 33 times and *Allahu Akbar* 34 times. This is better for you than having a servant."[1]

It has been narrated elsewhere that the Prophet ﷺ said, "Recite these words after every prayer and before going to sleep."[2]

Lady Fatimah requested for a servant and the Prophet responded by instructing them to recite these words. This points towards the fact that remembrance of God leads to an increase in one's strength and endurance.

One of the Prophet's daughters narrates that He used to teach them the following supplication:

سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ وَ بِحَمْدِهٖ وَلَا قُوَّةَ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ مَاشَاءَ اللّٰهُ كَانَ وَمَا لَمْ يَشَاْلَمْ يَكُنْ اَعْلَمُ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ وَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ اَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا۔

"I glorify, thank and praise God. The ability to perform good deeds emanates from God alone. Whatever God wills, happens; and whatever He does not want, does not happen. I believe that God has power over all things and His knowledge encompasses everything."

The Prophet said, "He who recites this supplication in the morning would be protected by God till the evening and he who recites it in the evening would be protected by God till the morning."[3]

If the kind of trust and surrender that has been conveyed in this supplication were to actually enter

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[1] Bukhari: Kitaab Fazail Ashaab anNabi ﷺ, Baab Manaqib Ali bin Abi Talib alQuraishi.

[2] Muslim: Kitaab azZikr wa adDua'a, Baab alTasbeeh Awwal anNahaar wa inda anNaum.

[3] Abu Dawood: Kitaab alAdab, Baab ma yaqool iza asbah.

one's heart and get rendered by one's tongue, then it is expected that God would protect him day in and day out.

The diligence with which the Mothers of the Believers and other ladies used to recite the supplications and other words of remembrance can be gauged by the following incident:

After the fajr prayers, Prophet Muhammad ﷺ left the quarters of his wife, lady Juwairiyah (God be pleased with her). When he left, she was sitting on her prayer mat. When he returned to her quarters after a few hours, she was still on her prayer mat. He asked her, 'Are you in the same state of remembering God that I had left you a few hours back?' She replied in the affirmative. He said, "After I had left this place, I recited four sentences which are equal in value to whatever you have been reciting all these hours. Those sentences are:

سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ وَ بِحَمْدِهٖ عَدَدَ خَلْقِهٖ وَ رِضَانَفْسِهٖ وَ زِنَةَ عَرْشِهٖ وَ مِدَادَ كَلِمَتِهٖ۔

I glorify, thank and praise God equal to the number of things He has created, equal to what would please Him, equal to the beauty of His throne and the radiance of His words."[1]

Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas (God be pleased with him) narrates that he accompanied the Prophet ﷺ to visit a lady (who was probably one of the Prophet's wives). He noticed that there were some date-seeds or pebbles kept in front of her which she was using to count her recitations. The Prophet asked her, May I tell you an

[1] Muslim: Kitaab azZikr wa adDua'a, Baab atTasbeeh Awwal anNahaar wa inda anNaum

easier and better way to chant God's name? You can do so by saying:

سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ عَدَدَ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَ سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ عَدَدَ مَا خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَ سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ عَدَدَ مَا بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ وَسُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ عَدَدَ مَا هُوَ خَالِقٌ وَاللّٰهُ أَكْبَرُ مِثْلُ ذٰلِكَ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ مِثْلُ ذٰلِكَ۔

"I glorify God equal to the things God has created in the skies. I glorify God equal to the things God has created on the earth. I glorify God equal to the things that exist in the skies and on the earth. I glorify God equal to the things God would create in the future. I proclaim His greatness, thank Him and praise Him in the same amount."[1]

Man cannot glorify and praise God enough. He would not be able to do justice to it even if he is engrossed in it every moment of the day. The amount mentioned in these aHadith reaches infinity, so that man might find support in these to express his boundless emotions for his Lord.

Worshipping often and more:

The enthusiasm for worship was found even in those ladies who are seldom referred to in books. Umar (God be pleased with him) had a slave-girl named Zaidah, about whom it has been said that:

كَانَتْ مِنَ الْمُجْتَهِدَاتِ فِي الْعِبَادَةِ وَ كَانَ النَّبِيُّ يُذْنِيْهَا لِمَا يَعْلَمُ مِنْهَا۔

"She was one of those ladies who used to worship a lot. This quality of hers made her close to the Prophet ﷺ."[2]

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[1] Tirmizi: Kitaab adDaoot, Baab fi Dua anNabi ﷺ.

[2] Ibn Atheer, Usd alGhaba: 7/123. This is part of a long Hadith and has been disputed among scholars of Hadith. Ibn Hajar alIsabah: 8/149-150.

Some ladies used to be engaged in worship to such an extent that the Prophet ﷺ had to ask them to be balanced in their approach. Lady Aishah narrates that Haula'a bint Taweet was sitting with her when the Prophet arrived in our presence. I introduced her to him and said that her engrossment in worship has gained much renown. It is said that she spends all her night in prayers. The Prophet ﷺ disliked it and said,

مَهْ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا تُطِيْقُوْنَ فَوَ اللهِ لَا يَمَلُّ اللهُ حَتّٰى تَمَلُّوْا وَ كَانَ اَحَبَّ الدِّيْنِ اِلَى اللهِ مَادَاوَمَ عَلَيْهِ صَاحِبُهٗ۔

"Do not do so. Worship only as much as you are capable of. I swear by God that although He wouldn't get tired of rewarding you, you would certainly get tired of worshipping Him. The (act of) religion that is appreciated by God is that which the devotee can be constant and regular with."[1]

Anas (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ once noticed a rope tied between two pillars of the masjid and enquired about it. The people replied that "It belongs to Zainab (probably the wife of the Prophet, Zainab bint Jahash... (God be pleased with her). She keeps praying all night and takes the support of this rope when she gets exhausted". The Prophet ﷺ said,

لَا، حُلُّوْهُ لِيُصَلِّ اَحَدُكُمْ نَشَاطَهٗ فَاِذَا فَتَرَ فَلْيَقْعُدْ۔

"No, it is not appropriate to do so. Untie it. You should offer prayers only while you are fresh. You should sit down when you feel tired."[2]

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[1] Bukhari: Kitaab alIman, Baab ahabbuddeen ilallah adumah. Muslim: Kitaab assalaat, Baab Fazeelat alAmal adDa'im.

[2] Bukhari: Kitaab alTahajjud, Baab ma yakrah minal tashdeed fil ibadah. Muslim: Kitaab asSalaat, Baab Fazilat alAmal adDaim.

Amongst the followers of the companions, Rabiah Basriah was known for her acts of worship and devotion. Allamah Ibn Khalikan writes:

كَانَتْ مِنْ اَعْيَانِ عَصْرِهَا وَ اَخْبَارُهَا فِى الصَّلَاحِ وَالْعِبَادَةِ مَشْهُوْرَةٌ۔

"She was one of the greatest souls of her time. She is well known for her acts of prayer, piety and worship."[1]

One of her maids states that she used to pray all night and take a short nap on the prayer mat during sunrise. In the morning, she used to wake up trembling and address herself thus: "O Rabiah, how much would you sleep and how long would you sleep? There would soon come a time when you would sleep so tight that you would wake up only on the Day of Judgment." She would supplicate thus, "O God, would you burn this heart that loves you in the fire of Hell?" It is said that one day a voice told her that it would not be so, you should be optimistic about Me.

Sufiyan Sauri once mentioned the hereafter and exclaimed, "O, the sorrow and grief!" She replied, "Don't say what is not true. Instead say, 'How little is the grief. If the grief of the hereafter were to actually fall upon a person, he would find it difficult to breathe.'[2]

Ibn Hibban has counted Umme asSahba'a, Ma'azah bint Abdullah among the devout worshipers. It is said that she never reclined on her bed after the death of her husband, Abu asSahba'a. She used to stay awake all night. She used to say, "I wonder at those eyes that keep sleeping despite being aware of the fact that we would be sleeping in the grave." She narrates

[1] Ibn Khalikan, Wafiat alA'ayaan: 2/48.
[2] Ibn Khalikan, Wafiat alA'ayaan: 2/48.

an incident about her adherence to Islamic law and the help she received from God in this regard. She once had a stomach ailment for which an alcoholic concoction was prescribed to her. When she was offered the medicine, she kept it aside and supplicated, "O God! You know that Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her) has narrated to me a Hadith that the Prophet ﷺ has prohibited the use of such things. Please protect me from it and restore my health out of Your grace." As soon as she finished her prayer, the cup of medicine got overturned and she got cured of her ailment[1].

The zeal to fast:

Fasting is an integral part of Islam and is as important as prayers in inculcating piety, purification and attachment with God. Hence, we have been encouraged to offer voluntary fasts over and above the ones obligatory upon us and its rewards announced to us. The books of Hadith and the Prophet's biography tell us that the lady companions used to fast very often.

Sa'ad bin Ibraheem narrates that the Mother of the Believers, Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her) used to always observe fasts.[2]

كانت تصوم الدهر

Her nephew, Qasim bin Muhammad says,

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[1] Ibn Hajar, Tahzeeb atTahzeeb: 12/401. Safiuddin alKhazraji, Khulasa Tazheeb alKamaal: 3/393. Here, it would be worth mentioning that the criteria of any deed being right or wrong would be the Qur'an and the Sunnah. If you find exaggeration in any of the episodes that have been narrated in this book, please note that these narrations are not the criteria for judgment. They have been mentioned only for the sake of relating to you how well the ladies of the first generation observed their rites of worship and how strong was their relationship with their Lord.

[2] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/68.

كَانَتْ تَسْرُدُ الصَّوْمَ۔

"She used to fast continuously."[1]

Even Lady Hafsah, the Mother of the Believers (God be pleased with her) used to observe fasts very often. Nafae narrates that:

مَا مَاتَتْ حَفْصَةُ حَتّٰى مَا تُفْطِرَ۔

"Lady Hafsah passed away when she began fasting continuously."[2]

It has been narrated that the Prophet ﷺ once wished to divorce her. At this, Gabriel told him,

رَاجِعْ حَفْصَةَ فَإِنَّهَا صَوَّامَةٌ قَوَّامَةٌ وَإِنَّهَا زَوْجَتُكَ فِي الْجَنَّةِ۔

"Resume your relations with Hafsah, for she regularly fasts and prays at night. She would be your wife in Paradise as well."[3]

We find many incidents related to the voluntary fasts of lady companions in Hadith literature, from which we gain insight into the zeal they had for fasting.

Lady Aishah narrates that she and Lady Hafsah were both fasting, but when food was brought before them during the fast, they both ate of it. When Lady Hafsah asked the Prophet ﷺ about it, he instructed them to compensate for it by fasting the next day.[4]

The Prophet ﷺ paid a visit to his wife, Juwairiyah (God be pleased with her) on a Friday. She was fasting that day. The Prophet asked her whether she had kept a fast the preceding day, at which she replied in the negative. The Prophet then asked her if she intended to keep a

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[1] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/75.
[2] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/86.
[3] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/84. Ibn Abdul Birr, alIstiyaab: 4/373.
[4] Tirmizi, Abwab asSaum, Baab ma ja'a fi Aijab alQaza'a. Abu Dawood, Kitaab asSaum, Baab man ra'aay alaihil qaza'a

fast the next day, and she again replied in the negative. At this, the Prophet ﷺ asked her to break her fast. It is mentioned in a narration that she broke it[1].

Umme Hani (God be pleased with her) narrates an incident related to the Conquest of Makkah. She says that she was seated to the right of the Prophet ﷺ and Lady Fatimah was seated to his left. A slave girl presented him with a drink. After drinking it, he offered it to Umme Hani. She immediately drank it (considering it to be a blessing) and told the Prophet, "O Messenger of God, I was fasting today, but I drank (the drink that you had tasted)." The Prophet asked her if she had fasted to compensate for a missed fast. She replied that it was a voluntary fast. At this, the Prophet ﷺ replied that the person observing a voluntary fast has the right to either complete the fast or break it mid-way.[2]"

Umme Ammarah narrates that the Prophet ﷺ once paid her a visit. She offered him some food. The Prophet asked her to eat as well, at which she informed him that she was fasting. The Prophet ﷺ said, "When a person eats food in front of a fasting person, the angels keep supplicating for the latter till the former keeps eating."[3]

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[1] Bukhari: Kitaab asSaum, Baab Saum Yaum alJuma'a. The majority view is that it is detestable to observe a fast only on Friday.

[2] Tirmizi: Abwab asSaum, Baab ma ja'a fi Iftar asSaim alMatu'u. Abu Dawood: Kitaab asSaum, Baab alRukhsat fi zalika. Darmi: Kitaab asSaum, Baab fi man yasbah sa'iman tatuan tumma yaftar. It should be known that among the jurists, the Hanafi scholars have ruled according to Lady Aishah's narration and the Shafi'i scholars have ruled according to Umme Hani's narration.

[3] Tirmizi: Abwab asSaum, Baab ma ja'a fi Fazl asSaim iza akala indahu. Also narrated by Ahmad, Ibn majah and Darmi in Mishkaat alMusabih, Kitaab asSaum.

Rabiyah bint Ma'ooz narrates that the Prophet ﷺ had it announced in the locality of the Ansar on the day of Ashura (tenth of Muharram) that whoever has had food or drink should refrain from having anything till sundown, and whoever is fasting should complete the fast. After this, we used to ourselves fast and make our children observe the fast as well. When they used to cry of hunger, we used to make woolen toys for them to play with and keep them busy till sundown.[1]

We also find mention of observing fasts on the behalf of others:

A lady asked the Prophet ﷺ that her mother has passed away. She had fifteen fasts pending upon her. In another narration it has been mentioned that she had a month of fasts pending upon her. In yet another Hadith, the number quoted is two months of fasts. The lady asked if she can keep the fasts on her behalf. The Prophet asked her if she would not have repaid any debt that her mother would have owed to others. The lady said yes. The Prophet told her that God is more worthy that His debt is paid back[2].

In another narration, the person asking this question is a man.

It is possible that these might have been separate episodes, because the nature of the question also differs in various narrations.[3]

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[1] Bukhari: Kitaab asSaum, Baab Saum alSubyaan. Muslim: Kitaab asSiyam, Baab Saum yaum Ashura.

[2] We are not discussing the juristic angles of this issue. All I would suffice at saying is that keeping fasts on behalf of the deceased is not required according to the Hanafi jurists.

[3] Bukhari: Kitaab asSaum, Baab man maat wa alaihi saum. Muslim: Kitaab asSiyamBaab qaza'a aSaum an alMayyat.

The Passion for Charity:

The emphasis the Qur'an lays on charity is next only to prayers. *Zakat* is an obligatory form of this charity. By offering prayers, man expresses his devotion to God, in a way telling Him that his heart, mind and every part of his body prostrates before Him. Charity, on the other hand, is a gesture which suggests that he does not consider his wealth his own, and that he is ready to spend it wherever God has commanded him to do so. Charity is expected from both- men as well as women. The Qur'an promises a great reward for the men and women who practice charity:

إِنَّ الْمُصَّدِّقِينَ وَالْمُصَّدِّقَاتِ وَأَقْرَضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُضَاعَفُ لَهُمْ وَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾

"Indeed, the men who practice charity and the women who practice charity and (they who) have loaned Allah a goodly loan - it will be multiplied for them, and they will have a noble reward." *[Surah alHadeed ayat 18]*

The aHadith have encouraged women to practice charity by various means, in consideration of their nature, psychology and circumstances.

Jabir and Abdullah ibn Abbas (God be pleased with them) narrate that it once so happened that on the occasion of Eid the Prophet ﷺ addressed the ladies separately, in which he encouraged them to spend in charity. In response, the ladies began offering their ornaments and other valuables. Bilal (God be pleased with him) was gathering them in his sheet.[1]

The Prophet ﷺ advised Asma'a, the daughter of Abu Bakr (God be pleased with them) that:

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[1] Bukhari: Kitaab alEidain, Baab Mauzatul Imam anNisa'a yaum alEid. Muslim: Kitab alEidain

اَنْفِقِیْ وَلَا تُحْصِیْ فَیُحْصِی اللّٰہُ عَلَیْکِ وَ لَا تُوْعِیْ فَیُوْعِی اللّٰہُ عَلَیْکِ۔

"Spend. Do not keep count (as to how much is to be given), otherwise God would also count out His blessings for you. Also, do not keep saving it with you; otherwise God would also give you in like manner."[1]

Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her) says that they once slaughtered a goat (and distributed its meat). The Prophet ﷺ enquired if any of it was left back. We replied that only the shoulder was left back. The Prophet remarked that what you should instead say is that all but the shoulder has been left back.[2]

The Prophet thus sought to explain that the charity that man offers is not rendered waste. Instead, what is actually wasted is the thing that he has finished off by eating and drinking. What is left with us is the amount we have spent in charity, for its rewards have been kept safe by God.

At times, man is not in a position to provide substantial aid to someone, and he feels hesitant at helping out with a small amount. This is usually what the women go through. The Prophet told them that charity can be performed at a very small scale as well; even if it might not completely solve the needs of the person concerned, it would still provide him with some respite.

Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ once said,

"Save yourself from the fire of Hell, even if by giving a single piece of date. It is as beneficial for a person who is satiated, as for a person who is hungry."[3]

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[1] Bukhari: Kitaab alHubbah, Baab Hubbah alMara'atal Ghair Zaujha. Muslim: Kitaab azZakaat, Baab alHas ala alInfaq wa karahatal Amsaak.

[2] Tirmizi: Abwaab Safatal Qiyamah, Baab 33.

[3] Qaal alManzari: narrated by Ahmad with a good chain. alTargheeb wal Tarheeb: 2/6.

Umme Bujaid (God be pleased with her) narrates that she once told the Prophet ﷺ that a beggar comes to my doorstep and it so happens at times that there is nothing in the house to offer him. I feel embarrassed because of this. The Prophet asked her not to return the beggar empty-handed; give him something, even if it a burnt hoof.[1]

A burnt hoof is a useless thing. The actual import of this Hadith is the strict instruction to not send the beggar empty handed; he should instead be given something or the other.

A woman usually interacts with her family members and neighbours. Since they have more right over her, she has been encouraged to look into their needs in many a Hadith.

The wife of Abdullah ibn Mas'ood and another lady from the Ansar once approached Bilal (God be pleased with them) and through him asked the Prophet ﷺ if they can spend the charity amount on their husbands and children. The Prophet replied that they can certainly do so.

لَهُمَا اَجْرَانِ اَجْرُ الْقَرَابَةِ وَ اَجْرُ الصَّدَقَةِ۔

"He said that they would get double the reward- one for helping relatives and one for offering charity."[2]

Umme Salmah (God be pleased with her) asked the Prophet ﷺ if she would be rewarded by God if she were to spend on her departed husband, Abu Salmah's children who are her own children and she cannot leave them alone. The Prophet replied:

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[1] Tirmizi: Abwaab azZakaat, Baab ma ja'a fi Haqqus Saa'il.

[2] Bukhari: Kitaab alNufqaat, Baab alZakaat ala azZauj walAitam fi. Muslim: Kitaab alZakaat, Baab Fazl alSadqah alal Aqrabeen wa azZaujah.

اَنْفِقِیْ عَلَیْهِمْ فَلَکِ اَجْرُمَا اَنْفَقْتِ عَلَیْهِمْ۔

"Spend on them. You would be rewarded for whatever you spend on them."[1]

Lady Maimunah (God be pleased with her) once emancipated a slave-girl and informed the Prophet ﷺ about the same. The Prophet told her that she would have earned more rewards if she would have given her to her uncle[2].

Abu Hurairah (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said:

یَا نِسَاءَ الْمُسْلِمَاتِ لَا تَحْقِرَنَّ جَارَةٌ لِجَارَتِهَا وَلَوْ فِرْسِنَ شَاةٍ۔

"O Muslim ladies, none of you should look down upon her neighbour, even if it happens to be a goat's hoof."[3]

There are two ways in which this Hadith can be interpreted. One, that every Muslim lady should regularly gift her neighbour according to her capacity. If she cannot afford a precious thing, she should at least give her a less-valuable thing without feeling shy about it. Another aspect of this Hadith is that the person who is being gifted should not pay attention to the value or price-tag of the gift. Rather, she should appreciate the emotions and love behind it. She should not refuse to accept even the smallest of things.

Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her) narrates that she once asked the Prophet ﷺ: "I have two neighbours.

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[1] Bukhari: Kitaab alNufqaat, Baab alZakaat ala azZauj walAitam fi. Muslim: Kitaab alZakaat, Baab Fazl alSadqah alal Aqrabeen wa azZaujah

[2] Bukhari: Kitaab alHubbah, Baab Hubbatul Maraatal Ghair Zaujha. Muslim: Kitaab azZakaat, Baab Fazl alNufqah walSadqah alal Aqrabeen. Her uncle was probably in need of one.

[3] Bukari: Kitaab alHubbah.

Whom should I send a gift to?" The Prophet replied, "The one whose door is closest to yours."[1]

This shows that Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her) recognized the rights of her neighbours. All she wanted to know was that in case there is more than one neighbour, who has a greater right over her.

After sharing these principles, let us now have a look at the practice of charity prevalent among the first generation of Muslim ladies....

The Mother of the Believers, Lady Zainab (God be pleased with her) was blessed with an extraordinary passion for charity. Imam Zahbi writes the following about her:

كَانَتْ مِنْ سَادَةِ النِّسَاءِ دِيْنًا وَ وَرْعًا وَجُوْدًا وَ مَعْرُوْفًا رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهَا۔

"She is counted amongst the foremost ladies with regards her level of religiosity, piety, charity and righteousness."[2]

She used to work hard and earn some money and then distribute it among the poor and deprived people.

Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ told his wives,

اَسْرَعُكُنَّ لِحَاقًا بِيْ اَطْوَلُكُنَّ يَدًا۔

"The one among you who would be the first to meet me is the one with the longest hands."

She adds that, "We used to compare the lengths of our hands to see who amongst us would be the first to depart. Lady Zainab was a short lady, but she was the first to pass away. From this we understood that what the Prophet ﷺ actually meant was that the first to die would be the one who is foremost in giving charity.

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[1] Bukhari: Kitaab alHubbah, Baab baman yabda' bil Hubbah.

[2] Zahabi, Seer a'Alaam alNabla'a: 2/149.

She used to work with her hands and spend all her earnings in charity."[1]

Barzah bint Rafae says that Caliph Umar (God be pleased with him) sent her 12000 dirham from the state treasury. When this large sum reached her, lady Zainab asked, "What am I supposed to do with all this money? My other sisters (the wives of the Prophet) are better placed at distributing it." She was told that the entire amount was for her alone. She exclaimed, "SubhanAllah! Keep this and cover it with a piece of cloth". She then told me, "Put your hand in this heap and give one handful to so-and-so and another to so-and-so". She thus kept distributing it among her relatives and orphans. When a little amount remained, I told her, "We also have a right on this." She replied, "Alright, take whatever is left under the cloth." This amount turned out to be 35 dirham.

In another narration, it has been mentioned that when Caliph Umar was told that she had distributed all the wealth in such a manner, he exclaimed that only good conduct could have been expected of her. He then paid her a visit and greeted her standing at the doorstep. He then sent her another bag of 1000 dirham and requested her to use it on her needs. But she distributed that amount as well.

Such was her sense of dignity that after getting this allowance from the state treasury, she raised her hands towards the heavens and supplicated, "O God, please do not keep me alive any longer. I do not want to receive this allowance from Umar." Accordingly, she passed away the same year.[2]

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[1] Muslim, Kitaab alFazail, Baab Fazail Zainab Ummul Mumineen.
[2] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/109,110.

She had made preparations for her own burial shroud. At the news of her demise, Caliph Umar (God be pleased with him) personally selected five pieces of clothes from the treasury and sent them across. She was shrouded in these very clothes, and the shroud she had left behind was given as charity by her sister Hamnah bint Jahash.[1]

Lady Aishah presented her obituaries in the following words,

ذَهَبَتْ حَمِيْدَةٌ، فَقِيْدَةٌ، مَنْزَعُ الْيَتَامٰى وَالْاَرَامِلِ۔

"She has departed who was praiseworthy, second to none, a refuge for the widows and the orphans."[2]

Usman bin Abdullah Jahash says,

مَا تَرَكَتْ زَيْنَبُ بِنْتُ جَحْشٍ دِرْهمًا وَلَا دِيْنَارًا كَانَتْ تَصَدَّقَ بِكُلِّ مَاقَدَرَتْ عَلَيْهِ وَ كَانَتْ مَاْوٰى الْمَسَاكِيْنِ۔

"Zainab bint Jahash (God be pleased with her) did not leave behind a single dirham or dinar. She used to spend in charity whatever she would receive. She was the refuge of the deprived."

It is said that after her death, Walid bin Abdul Malik had purchased the house in which she lived for a sum of 50,000 dirham in order to expand the premises of Masjide Nabvi.[3]

The Prophet ﷺ used to love Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her) more than any of his other wives. This is why Caliph Umar (God be pleased with him) had stipulated a higher allowance for her, which amounted to 12000 dirham, as opposed to 10000 dirham that was given to the other wives the Prophet had left behind. However, she was a very philanthropic lady; she used to spend

[1] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/110.
[2] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/110.
[3] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/114.

whatever came her way. Her charitable nature can be gauged by the following episode:

Umme Zarah narrates that Abdullah ibn Zubair (God be pleased with him) sent her two bags full of money which roughly amounted to a hundred thousand dirham. She sent for a tray and distributed the entire amount among the people. She was fasting that day. At sundown, she asked me to get some food to break her fast (*iftar*). I replied, "You have given away so much money today! Would it not have been possible to keep some money apart to purchase some meat for the *iftar*? She said, "Leave it. Do not blame me. Had you reminded me earlier, I would have purchased some meat as well."[1]

Ata bin Abi Rabah narrates that Amir Mu'awiyah (God be pleased with him) once sent her a hundred thousand dirham, which she distributed amongst the wives of the Prophet.[2]

Umru bin Zubair narrates that he has seen Lady Aishah give away 70,000 dirham as charity while the dress she was wearing was riddled with patches.[3]

The Mother of the Believers, Lady Zainab bint Khuzaimah (God be pleased with her) used to be very active in providing aid to the deprived and destitute people even before accepting Islam. She had earned the title of '*Ummul Masakeen*' (Mother of the deprived).[4]

Caliph Umar sent a bag filled with money to the Mother of the Believers, Lady Saudah bint Zam'a (God be pleased with them). Upon receiving this bag, she asked what it contained. She was told that it contained gold

[1] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/67.
[2] Zahabi, Seer A'alaam alNabla'a: 2/141.
[3] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/66.
[4] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/115. Ibn Abdul Birr, alIstiaab: 4/409.

coins. She lamented, "Has the bag been filled with gold coins the way it is filled with dates?" She then asked a girl to get a tray and have it distributed in charity.[1]

Lady Asma'a was the daughter of Abu Bakr and the sister of Lady Aishah (God be pleased with them all). Muhammad bin Munkadar says that she was very charitable in nature.[2]

كَانَتْ سَخِيَّةَ النَّفْسِ۔

She used to instruct her daughters and family members to spend in charity. She would say, "Do not keep telling yourself that you would spend in charity if there's something left after meeting our expenses. If you keep waiting for savings, you would never be able to save anything. And if you spend it, there would be no shortage."[3]

Caliph Umar (God be pleased with him) had allotted her an allowance of 1000 dirham. But she was very particular about charity. Abu azZubair avers that "I have never seen anyone as philanthropic as Lady Aishah and Lady Asma'a. But their method of charity was different. While Lady Aishah used to collect all the money and spend wherever required, Lady Asma'a never kept anything for the morrow and used to immediately spend whatever she would receive.[4]

Fatimah bint Manzar narrates that if she felt ill, she used to release her slaves.[5]

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[1] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/56. Ibn Hajar, alIsabah: 8/197.
[2] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/252.
[3] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/252.
[4] Bukhari: alAadab alMufrad: 1/377. Zahabi, Seer a'Alaam alNabla'a: 2/211.
[5] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/252.

Hajj and Umrah:

Hajj is one of the pillars of Islam, wherein a person performs some specific acts in some specific days in and around Makkah. In Umrah, a few rites of Hajj are performed during the rest of the year.

A lot has been mentioned about the virtues of performing the Hajj and the Umrah. The Hadith literature tells us that in case of ladies, it is akin to *jihad*. Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her) asked the Prophet ﷺ whether they can participate in *jihad* like the men do. The Prophet replied,

لٰكِنَّ اَحْسَنَ الْجِهَادِ وَاَجْمَلَهٗ حَجٌّ مَبْرُوْرٌ۔

"For ladies, the best and most beautiful jihad is Hajj mabroor."[1]

In another narration, Lady Aishah tells the Prophet ﷺ, "I could not notice any deed more virtuous than *jihad* in the entire Qur'an. In that case, why should we not participate with you in *jihad*?" The Prophet replied,

لَا وَلٰكِنَّ اَفْضَلَ الْجِهَادِ وَ اَجْمَلَهٗ حَجُّ الْبَيْتِ حَجٌّ مَبْرُوْرٌ۔

"No! The most virtuous and most beautiful jihad for ladies is Hajj of the Holy House, the Hajj that is done for God (mabroor)."[2]

Abu Hurairah (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

جِهَادُ الْكَبِيْرِ وَالصَّغِيْرِ وَ الضَّعِيْفِ وَالْمَرْأَةِ الْحَجُّ وَالْعُمْرَةُ۔

"The jihad of the elderly, the children, the weak and the women is Hajj and Umrah."[3]

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[1] Bukhari: Kitaab alHajj, Baab Hajj anNisa'.
[2] Nisai: Kitaab Manasik alHajj, Baab Fazl alHajj.
[3] Ibid.

Abu Hurairah (God be pleased with him) says that the Prophet's wives performed Hajj along with the Prophet ﷺ. After the demise of the Prophet, all his wives continued to perform Hajj, save Lady Saudah and Lady Zainab (God be pleased with them all).[1]

Ten thousand companions had performed the Hajj along with the Prophet ﷺ. We understand that there was an overwhelming participation of ladies as well. Such was their spirit and enthusiasm that even the sick, pregnant and lactating mothers were present.

Zaba'a bint Zubair (God be pleased with her) submitted before the Prophet that she had made the intention to perform Hajj but had fallen sick. The Prophet told her, "Perform the Hajj and enter into the *Ehram* with the intention that you would come out of it when God stops you from proceeding further." [2]

Jabir (God be pleased with him) narrates that when the Prophet announced the Hajj in 10 AH, everyone proceeded for Hajj. When they reached Zul Hulaifah, Asma'a bint Umais gave birth to Muhammad bin Abu Bakr (God be pleased with them all).[3]

Abdullah ibn Abbas (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ met some travelers in Ruha'a. A lady traveler showed him a child and asked whether this child's Hajj would also stand performed? The Prophet replied that, "Yes, his Hajj would be performed and you would get its rewards."[4]

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[1] Ibn Sa'ad: alTabqaat alKubra: 8/55.

[2] Bukhari: Kitaab anNikah, Baab alAkfa'a fiddeen. Muslim: Kitaab alHajj, Baab Jawaz Ishtaraat alMahram alTahleel.

[3] Muslim: Kitaab alHajj. Abu Dawood: Kitaab alManasik.

[4] Muslim: Kitaab alHajj. Abu Dawood: Kitaab alManasik.

An Ansari lady companion, Umme Sanan (God be pleased with her) could not participate in the Hajj performed by the Prophet ﷺ. On his return, the Prophet asked her why she remained absent. She replied that they had only two camels, of which one was used by her husband and son to perform the Hajj and the other was being used in the fields. The Prophet ﷺ said, "In that case, perform the Umrah in Ramazan. God would reward you at par with Hajj."[1]

Umme Ma'aqal also could not perform the Hajj. The Prophet gave the same advice to her- to perform the Umrah in Ramazan[2].

In this manner, all those ladies who could not perform the Hajj despite making an intention to do so were advised by the Prophet to perform the Umrah in Ramazan. Guidelines have also been issued to provide facilities to ladies for Hajj and remove the obstacles from their path. Ladies cannot perform the Hajj without an accompanying *mehram* (husband/ close male relative with whom marriage is prohibited). Abdullah ibn Abbas (God be pleased with him) narrates that a person asked the Prophet ﷺ, "My wife wants to perform Hajj, but I have enrolled myself for the battle." The Prophet asked him to accompany his wife for Hajj."[3]

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[1] Bukhari: Abwab alUmrah, Baab Umrah Ramazan. Muslim: Kitaab alHajj, Baab Fazl alUmrah fi Ramazan

[2] Abu Dawood: Kitaab alManasik, Baab alUmrah. There is a lot of dispute concerning the details of this episode. One may refer to Aun alMa'abood: 2/150-151. It is possible that both the aforementioned narrations refer to the same episode, but it is more plausible that these are two separate incidents. Hafiz Ibn Hajar refers to this in alIsabah fi Tamyeez alSahabah: 8/479

[3] Bukhari: Abwab alUmrah, Baab Hajj anNisa'a. Muslim: Kitaab alHajj, Baab Safar alMaraat ma'a Mahram ilal Hajj wa gairah.

The ladies used to not only perform their own Hajj, but performed Hajj on behalf of others as well.

Abdullah ibn Abbas (God be pleased with him) narrates that a lady from the Jaheenah tribe asked the Prophet ﷺ, "My mother had vowed to perform Hajj, but she passed away before performing it. Can I perform Hajj on her behalf?" The Prophet replied,

حُجِّيْ عَنْهُ أَرَأَيْتِ لَوْ كَانَ عَلَى أُمِّكِ دَيْنٌ أَكُنْتِ قَاضِيَةً أُقْضُوْا اللهَ فَاللّٰهُ أَحَقُّ بِالْوَفَاءِ۔

"Perform Hajj on her behalf. Would you not have repaid a debt if your mother had owed one? Repay God's debt as well, for God is more worthy of being repaid His debt."[1]

Fazl bin Abbas (God be pleased with him) narrates that a lady from the Khath'am tribe asked the Prophet ﷺ, "God has obligated His servants to perform Hajj. My father is also obligated to perform it. However, he is too old to even sit on a camel. Would his Hajj stand performed if I perform it on his behalf?" The Prophet replied, "Yes, it would be performed."[2]

There is no hardship and rigidity in religion. A lady who had adopted such an attitude was admonished by the Prophet ﷺ. Uqbah bin Aamir Jahni (God be pleased with him) says that his sister had vowed that she would embark on foot to visit the House of God. She asked him to enquire about this from the Prophet. When I informed the Prophet, he told me, "There is no need to do so. She should do both- walk as well as use

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[1] Bukhari: Abwaab alUmrah, Baab alHajj wa anNazar an alMayyat.

[2] Bukhari: Abwaab alUmrah, Baab Hajj alMaraat an arRijaal. Muslim: Kitaab alHajj, Baab an alAajiz.

the vehicle." In another narration, the Prophet asked her to atone for her oath.[1]

In the books of Hadith, the Hajj journey has been called a journey in the cause of God. It is also mentioned that God accepts the supplications of a Hajj pilgrim. Hence, people have been encouraged to request them to supplicate for them. On one occasion, Umme Darda (God be pleased with her) asked Safwan if he intended to perform Hajj. When he replied in the affirmative, she told him, "Supplicate for us as well, for the Prophet ﷺ has said that when a man supplicates for his brother in his absence, it is accepted by God. An angel seated near his head responds to his supplication with 'Amen' and prays that God may also reward him with that blessing. Safwan adds that when he took her leave, he met Abu Darda in the market who shared a similar Prophetic narration with him.[2]

This was the level of worship of these ladies. In the next chapter, we would discuss their level of knowledge and virtue.

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[1] Bukhari: Abwaab alUmrah, Baab man Nazar alMashi ilal Kabaah.

[2] Muslim: Kitaab alZikr wa adDua'a, Baab Fazl adDua'a lil Muslimeen bazahar alghaib. Ibn Majah: Kitaab alManasik, Baab Fazl Dua'a alHaaj.

Muslim Women
(In the field of Knowledge and Virtue)

Islam has spoken extensively about the virtues of religious knowledge and has emphatically encouraged us to learn it and teach the same to others. This led to an extensive spread of religious knowledge in just a few years, giving rise to many religious scholars-both men and ladies. We shall speak about certain distinguished ladies belonging to the first generation of Islam in this chapter.

Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her)

The academic status of Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her) surpasses that of all other lady companions. There are very few companions who can compete with her in this regard from amongst the men as well. Her academic prowess and deep insight has been acknowledged by the luminaries of their times. Her student and nephew, Urwah bin Zubair says that,

لَقَدْ صَحِبْتُ عَائِشَةَ فَمَا رَأَيْتُ اَحَدًا قَطُّ كَانَ اَعْلَمَ بِاٰيَةٍ اُنْزِلَتْ وَلَا بِفَرِيْضَةٍ وَلَا بِسُنَّةٍ وَلَا بِشِعْرٍ وَلَا اَرْوٰى لَهٗ مِنْ اَيَّامِ الْعَرَبِ وَلَا بِنَسَبٍ وَّلَا بِكَذَا وَ بِكَذَا وَلَا بِقَضَاءٍ وَلَا طِبٍّ مِنْهَا۔

"I have been in the company of Lady Aishah. I have never come across anyone who has more knowledge than her on matters concerning the revelation of ayaat, obligations, practice of the Prophet (Sunnah), literary

acumen, Arab history, ancestry of tribes etc. etc. as well as the judgments of court cases and even medicine."[1]

He narrates: I asked her, "Dear aunt, how did you study medicine?" She replied, "Whenever I or anyone else used to fall sick, its treatment used to be prescribed. In a similar manner, people used to advise treatment to others and I used to retain it in my memory."

Imam Zuhri says,

لَوْ جُمِعَ عِلْمُ النَّاسِ كُلِّهِمْ ثُمَّ عِلْمُ اَزْوَاجِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ لَكَانَتْ عَائِشَةُ اَوْسَعَهُمْ عِلْمًا۔

"If the knowledge of all the people is collected and the knowledge of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ is also added to it, the knowledge of Lady Aishah would outweigh them all."[2]

Ata'a bin Abi Ribah says,

كَانَتْ عَائِشَةُ افقَهَ النَّاسِ وَ اَعْلَمَ النَّاسِ وَ اَحْسَنَ النَّاسِ رَايًا فِي الْعَامَّةِ۔

"Lady Aishah was the most intellectual person, most knowledgeable and the one who used to present the best opinion among all people."[3]

Imam Zahabi states:

لَا اَعلَمُ فِيْ اُمَّةِ محمَّد ﷺ بَلْ وَلَا فِي النِّسَاءِ مطلَقًا اِمْرَأَةً اَعْلَمَ مِنْهَا۔

"I am not aware of any Muslim lady, or any lady for that matter, who had more knowledge than Lady Aishah."[4]

Lady Aishah is among those companions who have narrated the most aHadith from the Prophet ﷺ.

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[1] Zahabi, Seer A'alamalNabla'a: 2/128, 129.

[2] Hakim, alMustadrak alal Sahihain, Kitaab Ma'arfatul Sahabah, Hadith # 6734/2332.

[3] Zahabi, Talkhees alMustadrak: 4/14.

[4] Zahabi, Seer A'alaam alNabla'a: 1/101.

She narrates most of these aHadith directly from the Prophet ﷺ, with a few being narrated on the authority of Abu Bakr, Umar, Fatimah, Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas, Hamzah bin Umr alAslami and Jazamah bint Wahab (God be pleased with them all). All these narrations total 2210, of which 174 aHadith have been recorded by both Bukhari and Muslim. Apart from these, another 54 aHadith can be found in Saheeh Bukhari and 69 in Saheeh Muslim. The rest of the aHadith can be found in other collections of Hadith.[1]

Lady Umme Salmah (God be pleased with her):

The Mother of the Believers, Lady Umme Salmah (God be pleased with her) has also narrated many aHadith directly from the Prophet ﷺ, and a few on the authority of Abu Salmah and Lady Fatimah (God be pleased with them). More than 35 companions and their followers (both men and women) have recorded aHadith from her.[2]

Her narrations total 378, of which 13 have been recorded by both Bukhari and Muslim, another 3 can be found only in Bukhari and 13 only in Muslim.[3]

Lady Umme Salmah held a distinguished position among the jurists as well. Imam Zahabi says that,

كَانَتْ تُعَدُّ مِنْ فُقَهَاءِ الصَّحَابَةِ.

"She was counted among those companions who were jurists."[4]

[1] Zahabi, Seer A'alaam alNabla'a: 2/101.
[2] Ibn Hajar, Tahzeeb alTahzeeb: 12/405.
[3] Zahabi, Seer A'alaam alNabla'a: 2/143.
[4] Ibid.

Lady Hafsah (God be pleased with her):

The Mother of the Believers, Lady Hafsah was the daughter of Umar (God be pleased with them). She has narrated aHadith directly from the Prophet ﷺ as well as from her esteemed father. People who have narrated from Lady Hafsah include her brother, Abdullah ibn Umar, his son Hamzah, wife Safiyah, Umme Bashar alAnsariyah, Muttlib bin Wada'a and Harithah bin Wahab.[1]

Lady Hafsah has narrated 60 aHahith, of which 4 have been recorded by both Bukhari and Muslim, while another 6 can be found in Saheeh Muslim.[2]

Lady Umme Habibah (God be pleased with her):

The Mother of Believers, Lady Umme Habibah was the daughter of Abu Sufiyan (God be pleased with them). She has narrated 65 aHadith from the Prophet ﷺ. Two of these can be found in both- Bukhari and Muslim, and a third in Muslim. People who have narrated from her include her daughter Habibah, brother Ameer Muawiyah, nephew Abdullah bin Utbah, Urwah bin Zubair, Sufiyah bint Shaibah and Zainab bint Abu Salmah.[3]

Lady Maimunah bint alHarith (God be pleased with her):

The Mother of Believers, Lady Maimunah bint alHarith was married to the Prophet ﷺ in the year 7 AH after the demise of her husband, Abu Raham. Lady Aishah says that she was the most pious of us and

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[1] Ibn Hajar, Tahzeeb atTahzeeb: 12/361.
[2] Zahabi, Seer A'alaam alNabla'a: 2/164.
[3] Zahabi, Seer A'alaam alNabla'a: 2/155.

foremost in maintaining family ties. She has narrated 46 aHadith from the Prophet ﷺ. Those who have narrated from her include her nephews Abdullah bin Abbas, Abdullah bin Shadad, Abdur Rahman bin alSaib, Yazeed bin alAsam, her servant Abdullah Khulani, her slave-girl Nadiyah, her emancipated slaves Ata'a bin Yasar and Sulaiman bin Yasar and Aliyah bint Sabi'.[1]

Lady Lubabah bint alHarith (God be pleased with her):

She was the wife of the Prophet's ﷺ uncle, Abbas (God be pleased with them). It is said that she was the first lady to accept Islam after Lady Khadijah (God be pleased with her). Ibn Abdul Birr writes that she was among those ladies whose children were righteous and virtuous. Her children include Fazl bin Abbas, Abdullah ibn Abbas, Ma'abad, Khash'am, Abdur Rahman and Umme Habibah. All of these grew in name and fame. She used to regularly fast on Mondays and Thursdays, from which we get an idea about her piety. She has narrated 30 aHadith from the Prophet ﷺ.[2]

Lady Umme Hani bint Abi Talib (God be pleased with her):

Umme Hani was the cousin of the Prophet ﷺ and the true sister of Ali. She accepted Islam after the conquest of Makkah. 46 narrations of the six major books of Hadith have been attributed to her. Those

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[1] Ibn Hajar, alIsabah fi Tamyeez alSahabah: 8/322-324. Tahzeeb atTahzeeb: 12/402. Safiuddin alKhazraji: Khulasah Tazheeb Tahzeeb alKamaal: 3/392.

[2] Ibn Abdul Birr, alIstiaab: 4/461. Safiuddin alKhazraji: Khulasah Tazheeb Tahzeeb alKamaal: 3/392.

who have narrated from her include her sons and grandsons and other companions.[1]

Lady Asma'a bint Abu Bakr (God be pleased with her):

Lady Asma'a, the daughter of Abu Bakr and wife of Zubair (God be pleased with them all), was among the first to accept Islam. Only 17 people had accepted Islam before her. She has narrated quite a few aHadith from the Prophet ﷺ. Those who have narrated from her include: her son Abdullah ibn Zubair, grandson Abdullah bin Ibaad bin Abdullah, Abdullah bin Abbas, Sufiyah bint Shaibah, Fatimah bint Manzar, her emancipated slave Abdullah bin Kaisan and her grandson Ibaad bin Hamzah.[2]

She has narrated 58 aHadith in all, 13 of which are found in both- Muslim and Bukhari. Apart from these, there are 5 aHadith recorded in Bukhari and 4 in Muslim.[3]

Lady Khaulah bint Hakeem (God be pleased with her):

She has been described by Allamah Ibn Abdul Birr as:

كَانَتْ اِمْرَأَةً صَالِحَةً فَاضِلَةً۔

"She was a righteous and virtuous lady."[4]

While narrating a Hadith from her, Umar bin Abdul Azeez says,

زَعَمَتِ الْمَرْأَةُ الصَّالِحَةُ خَوْلَةُ بِنْتُ حَكِيْم۔

"Khaulah bint Hakeem, who was a righteous lady, narrates that...."[5]

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[1] Ibn Hajar: alIsabah: 4/485-486. Safiuddin alKhazraji: Khulasah Tazheeb Tahzeeb alKamaal: 3/403-404.

[2] Zahabi, Seer A'alaam alNabla'a: 2/208.

[3] Ibid: 2/214.

[4] Ibn Abdul Birr, alIstiaab: 4/290.

[5] Tirmizi: Kitaab alBirr wasSilah, baab ma ja'a fi hubbul walad.

This shows that her righteousness and her knowledge and virtue were widely acknowledged. She has narrated 5 aHadith.[1]

Lady Nusaibah bint Ka'ab alias Umme Atiyah (God be pleased with her):

She is a renowned companion from the Ansars. She has narrated 40 aHadith from the Prophet ﷺ. Those who have narrated from her include Anas bin Malik, Muhammad bin Seereen, Hafsah bint Seereen and Imam Sharaheel.[2]

Lady Fariah bint Malik (God be pleased with her):

Caliph Usman (God be pleased with him) had ajudged a case relying upon the narration of a lady companion.

Zainab bint Ka'ab bin Ajrah narrates that the sister of Abu Saeed Khudri, Fariah bint Malik told her that "Upon the death of my husband, I approached the Prophet ﷺ and sought permission from him to spend my mourning days with my family members because my husband did not have a house of his own. However, the Prophet declined my request and asked me to spend my mourning days in the very house in which I received the news of my husband's demise. When a similar case was brought before the court of Caliph Usman, the people informed him about my episode. He called me to the court. When I arrived there, I found him seated among some people. He asked me to relate the incident. After I had done so, he issued a verdict that the widow whose case was

[1] Safiuddin alKhazraji:Khulasah Tazheeb Tahzeeb alKamaal: 3/380.
[2] Ibn Hajar, Tahzeeb atTahzeeb: 12/204. alKhazraji:Khulasah Tahzeeb Tahzeeb alKamaal: 3/394.

brought to his court should spend her mourning days in the same house where she had received news of her husband's demise."[1]

Certain other lady companions:

In order to gain a proper insight into the academic and ideological conditions prevalent in a particular age, it is necessary to study the lives and contributions of its lesser known personalities as well. A couple of incidents have been presented here in this regard:

It is said about Umme Waraqah (God be pleased with her) that she had compiled the Qur'an. From another narration we know that she had had read the Qur'an. The Prophet ﷺ had asked her to lead her family members in prayers. A person to call for the prayers had also been appointed for her.[2]

The Prophet ﷺ once told an elderly lady that not a single old lady would enter Paradise. She asked why that was so. Anas bin Malik (God be pleased with him) says that she had studied the Qur'an. Hence, the Prophet told her:

اَمَا تَقْرَئِيْنَ الْقُرْاٰن اِنَّا اَنْشَاْنَاهُنَّ اِنْشَاءً فَجَعَلْنَاهُنَّ اَبْكَارًا۔

"Do you not read the Qur'an? God says that we have created those ladies anew and made them virgins."[3]

This means that old ladies would enter Paradise as young women.

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[1] Abu Dawood: Kitaab alTalaq, Baab fil Mutawaffa anha Tathkal. For details, refer Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat: 8/367.

[2] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/457. Ibn Abdul Birr, alIstiaab: 4/519. Ibn Hajar, alIsabah: 8/489-490.

[3] Mishkaat alMasabeeh, Kitaab alAdab, Baab alMuzah ba-hawalah Razeen.

The Prophet ﷺ had allotted a slave-girl, Raitah bint Hayan to Ali (God be pleased with them). It has been narrated that Ali had taught her a part of the Qur'an.[1]

The Qur'an and the Hadith are the foundations of Islam. It is through these sources that we primarily derive the details of religion and gain guidance. After presenting an account of the contributions of the lady companions in strengthening these foundations and propagating its message, we shall now discuss the contributions of those ladies who have studied under the companions and gained tremendously in knowledge and virtue.

Lady Umme Darda AlHajeemah (God have mercy upon her):

Usman bin Abu alAtkah and Umme Jabir relate that Umme Darda was raised up by Abu Darda. As a child, she used to wear a *barnas* (a long gown that used to cover the head) and walk around in the company of Abu Darda. She would stand along with men in the congregational prayers and sit amongst religious scholars in their gatherings. When she reached of age, Abu Darda asked her to offer her prayers with the ladies.[2]

Her thirst for knowledge can be gauged from an episode narrated by Auf bin Abdullah. He says, "We were once seated in the company of Umme Darda. After having spent a lot of time in her presence, we submitted that we must have caused you a lot of trouble; you must have got bored. She replied, 'My intention in any act is the worship of God. There is

[1] Ibn Atheer, Usd alGhaba: 7/106. Ibn hajar, alIsabah fi Tamyeez alSahabah: 8/130.

[2] Ibn Hajar, Tahzeeb atTahzeeb: 12/414.

nothing more satisfying than sitting in the presence of religious scholars and engaging in discussions with them'. She then hid herself behind a veil and asked a person to recite the following ayat: 'And We have [repeatedly] conveyed to them the Qur'an that they might be reminded' [Surah alQasas, ayat 51] and explained that the best knowledge is the recognition of God."

Abd Rabb was her student. He says that she once wrote on the slate, 'Learn wisdom during childhood. You would then teach it to others once you grow up' and 'Every farmer would one day harvest whatever he has sown- whether good or bad'.[1]

She has narrated aHadith from Abu Darda, Salman Farsi, Fazlah bin Ubaid, Abu Hurairah, Ka'ab bin Aasim and Aishah (God be pleased with them all). After mentioning the names of 19 people who have narrated aHadith from her, Hafiz Ibn Hajar writes that there are many more who have narrated aHadith on her authority.[2]

Imam Navavi writes that:

رَوَى عَنْهَا خَلَائِقُ مِنْ كِبَارِ التَّابِعِيْنَ۔

"Many elders from among the followers of the companions have narrated from her."[3]

Imam Zahabi writes about her:

كَانَتْ فَقِيْهَةً عَالِمَةً عَابِدَةً مَلِيْحَةً جَمِيْلَةً وَاسِعَةَ الْعِلْمِ وَافِرَةَ الْعَقْلِ۔

"She was an intellectual, a scholar, devout and beautiful, had vast knowledge and was an intelligent lady."[4]

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[1] Navavi, Tahzeeb alAsma'a wal Lugaat: 2/360-361.
[2] Ibn Hajar, Tahzeeb atTahzeeb: 2/414.
[3] Navavi, Tahzeeb alAsma'a wal Lugaat: 2/360.
[4] Zahabi, Tazkirah alHuffaz: 1/50.

Umrah bint Abdur Rahman (God have mercy upon her):

She was brought up under the care of Lady Aishah and was among her close students. She passed away in the year 98 AH. Apart from Lady Aishah, she has narrated aHadith from Umme Hisham bint Harithah, Habibah bint Sahal, Umme Habibah and Hamnah bint Jahash as well (God be pleased with them all). The elders of her time who have narrated aHadith on her authority include Imam Zuhri, Abdullah bin Abu Bakr bin Hazm, Yahya bin Saeed Ansari, Urwah bin Zubair, Sulaiman bin Yasaar and Umru bin Dinaar. She is regarded as an intellectual and the leader of lady followers of the companions of the Prophet ﷺ.[1]

Her intellectual status can be understood from the opinions held about her by the leading scholars of Hadith. Ibn Ma'een says, "She is *siqah hujjah*[2] (trustworthy and an authority)".

Ahmad bin Muhammad says that he has heard Ibn Ma'een refer to her using glorious terms. He would say that she is among the most reliable people to have narrated from Lady Aishah. Ibn Hibban and Ajali have also concurred with this opinion. Ibn Hibban claims that her knowledge of Lady Aishah's narrations surpassed the knowledge of others. Sufiyan Sauri avers that amongst those who have narrated from Lady Aishah, the most reliable are Umrah bint Abdur Rahman, Qasim bin Muhammad and Urwah bin Zubair. It is known that Abdur Rahman bin Qasim used to approach her to learn about Lady Aishah's narrations. Caliph Umar bin Abdul Aziz wrote to

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[1] Safiuddin Khazraji, Khulasah Tazheeb Tahzeeb alKamaal: 3/388.

[2] *Siqah Hujjah* is a terminology used in the science of Hadith. Such terminologies cannot be translated completely in any other language.

Umar bin Abdur Rahman that there is no person who has more knowledge of Lady Aishah's narrations than her.[1]

Ibn Sa'ad writes: "She was a scholar. Caliph Umar bin Abdul Aziz had instructed Abu Bakr bin Muhammad bin Hazm to collect her aHadith in writing.[2]

Hafsah bint Seereen (God have mercy upon her):

She had completed a study of the Qur'an at the tender age of twelve. She has narrated aHadith from Yahya bin Seereen, Anas bin Malik, Umme Atiyah Ansariyah, Ummul Raeh, Abul Aliyah, Abu Zabiyan, Rabi bin Ziyad and Heerah, the mother of Hasan Basari. Those who have narrated from her include elders like Muhammad bin Seereen, Qatadah, Asim alAhool, Ayub Sakhtiyani, Khalid alKhuza'a, Ibn Aun and Hisham bin Hayan.

Imam Ibn Ma'een says that she was reliable and an authority. Ibn Hibban has also regarded her as reliable. Ayas bin Mu'awiyah writes,

مَا اَدْرَكْتُ اَحَدًا اُفَضِّلُهُ عَلٰى حَفْصَةَ۔

"I have not come across anyone who was better than Hafsah bint Seereen."

She passed away in the year 101 AH.[3]

Aishah bint Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas (God have mercy upon her):

Aishah bint Sa'ad had seen six of the Prophet's wives. She says, "When I was a child, I used to go to

[1] Ibn Hajar, Tahzeeb atTahzeeb: 12/389.
[2] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat: 8/480.
[3] Ibn Hajar, Tahzeeb atTahzeeb: 12/360-361.

them and they used to make me sit on their laps and supplicate God to bless me." People used to have high regard for her. Habeeb bin Marzooq says that he saw a lady sitting outside the masjid along with some other ladies and there was a lamp burning around them. On enquiry, I was told that she was Aishah, the daughter of Sa'ad bin Abi Waqqas (God be pleased with him).[1]

She has narrated aHadith from her illustrious father and Umme Zarr. Those who have narrated from her include Jaeed bin Abdur Rahman, Ayub Sakhtiyani, Hakam bin Atibah, Khuzaimah, Abu Zinad, Muhajir bin Musmar, Ubaidah bint Nabil and Imam Malik.

Khalil says that: "Imam Malik has not narrated from any lady save her. Ibn Hibban has listed her as a reliable narrator. Ijali has also said the same.

She passed away in the year 117 AH.[2]

Aishah bint Talhah (God have mercy upon her):

Umme Kulsum bint Abu Bakr was the mother of Aishah bint Talhah. She has narrated aHadith from Lady Aishah (God be pleased with her). Those who have narrated from her include Talhah bin Abdullah, Habeeb bin Umru, Talhah bin Yahya, Mu'awiyah bin Is'haq, Moosa bin Ubaidullah, Fazeel bin Umru, Minhal bin Umru, Ata'a bin Abi Rabah and Umru bin Saeed. Ibn Ma'een regards her as trustworthy and an authority. Ijali and Ibn Hibban have also enlisted her as trustworthy. Abu Zar'ad Mashki, a Hadith scholar of repute says that:

حَدَّثَ عَنْهَا النَّاسُ لِفَضْلِهَا وَ أَدَبِهَا۔

[1] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat: 8/467-468.
[2] Ibn Hajar, Tahzeeb atTahzeeb: 12/386-387.

"People have narrated aHadith from her because of her knowledge, virtue, good manners and character."[1]

Heerah Ummul Hasan (God have mercy upon her):

Heerah, the mother of Hasan Basari was the bondswoman of Umme Salamah (God be pleased with her). She has narrated aHadith from Umme Salamah and Aishah (God be pleased with them). Those who have narrated from her include Hasan Basari, Saeed Basari, Ali bin Zaid bin Jad'aan, Mu'awiyah bin Qarah Mazni and Hafsah bint Seereen.

We shall now discuss the contributions of ladies belonging to later generations....

Syedah Nafeesah (God have mercy upon her):

She belonged to the family of the Prophet, being the daughter of Hasan s/o Zaid s/o Hasan s/o Ali bin Abi Talib. She arrived in Egypt along with her husband, Is'haq bin Ja'afar asSadiq. Alternatively, it is also said that she reached Egypt with her father, Hasan. Allamah ibn Khallikan says that Nafeesah was a very righteous and pious lady. Her knowledge and virtue was such that Imam Shafi'i himself approached her in Egypt to listen to her Hadith narration. When he passed away, his funeral was brought to her house and she offered the funeral prayers from within her house. Ibn Khallikan says that the Egyptians had a deep reverence for her. She passed away in the year 208 AH.[2]

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[1] Tahzeeb atTahzeeb: 12/436,437.

[2] Ibn Khallikan, Wafiat alAyan: 5/56-57.

Bint Saeed bin alMusayyib (God have mercy upon her):

Saeed bin alMusayyib is regarded as the leader of the followers of the companions. One of his students, Abu Wada'a relates that: I used to attend the discourses held by Saeed bin Musayyib. It so happened that I remained absent for a few days. When I began attending his sessions again, he asked me where I had been. I replied that I couldn't attend the sessions owing to the demise of my wife. He said that I should have informed him about this news so that he could attend her funeral. When I rose to depart, he asked me if I had married again. I said, "May God shower his blessings upon you! Who would give this poor man his daughter's hand in marriage? I do not own more than a few dirhams." He asked me: "Should I get you married? Are you ready for a second marriage?" I gave him an affirmative reply. He then recited the glory and praise of God and married off his daughter to me and fixed the meher at two-three dirham. When I finally rose from the gathering, I was overwhelmed with joy. I was planning to go home and borrow some money from someone. I offered the *maghrib* prayers. I was fasting that day. Just as I was about to begin my meal of bread and oil, someone knocked my door. When I enquired who it was, a voice said, 'Saeed'. For a moment I stood confused which Saeed it could be. I started recollecting all the people by the name Saeed whom I knew, but it never crossed my mind that it could be my teacher, Saeed bin alMusayyib. This is because he had spent the last forty years of his life shuttling between his home and the masjid only; he never used to go anywhere else. When I answered the door, I saw Saeed bin Musayyib standing outside. The first thought that came to my mind was that he must

probably have given his decision a second thought. I submitted, "Abu Muhammad, why did you take the trouble of coming here? I would have myself come to you if you would have sent for me." He replied, "No, as of now, it is more becoming that I should come to you." When I asked him what brought him to my place, he said, "You are a young married man. It did not seem right for you to live without your wife. This is your wife, take her along. I saw her standing behind him. He then directed her to enter my house, closed the door and left. The lady felt so shy that she at once sat on the floor. I went to the roof and called out to my neighbours. They asked me what the matter was. I informed them that Saeed bin alMusayyib has married off his daughter to me and has unexpectedly left her at my place and returned back. Behold, she is here at my place. The people came over, even my mother came over. She asked me not to touch her for three days, until she was done with decking her up as a bride. When I saw her after three days, she turned out to be the most beautiful woman I had seen. She had memorized the Qur'an, had complete knowledge of the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ and recognized the rights of a husband. A month passed by and neither did Saeed bin alMusayyib visit me, nor did I attend his discourse. After a month, when I finally attended his discourse and greeted him, he greeted me back but did not utter a word more. When everyone left the gathering and there was no one left but me, he asked me how his daughter was. I replied, "Such that a friend would desire and an enemy detest." He said that I was free to admonish and reprimand her if she annoyed me.

This daughter of Saeed bin alMusayyib was none other than the one for whom the incumbent Caliph,

Abdul Malik bin Marwan had sent a proposal for his son, Waleed when he had nominated him his successor to the throne. Saeed had, however, rejected the proposal. Abdul Malik tried various ways and means to convince him and even had him lashed and drenched in cold water during the winter. But Saeed did not relent and stood his stand.[1]

In the context of this incident, it is also narrated that on the next day of his marriage, when Abu Wad'a was preparing to leave his house to attend the discourse, his wife asked him to sit beside her and that she would share with him the lessons that are delivered by Saeed bin alMusayyib.[2]

There are many things to learn from this episode, of which two lessons stand out. One, we gain insight into the personality of Saeed bin alMusayyib, who preferred to marry off his daughter to a student acquiring knowledge instead of a prince. Second, a girl can represent the likes of Saeed bin alMusayyib, the scholar of his age.

alMaweed Zainab bint Abul Qasim (God have mercy upon her):

She was born in the year 524 AH in Neshapur and died in the same town in 615 AH.

Ibn Khallikan has the following to say about her:

"She was a scholar who benefitted from the company of many a leading scholar, studied aHadith from them and obtained permission from them to narrate and teach them to others. Her teachers include Abul Qasim Neshapuri, Abul Qasim Zahir, Abu Bakr Wajiah, Abul Muzaffar, Abul Fatooh Abdul Wahab and others. She

[1] Ibn Khallikan, Wafiaat alA'ayaan: 2/117-119.
[2] Ibn alHaaj, alMudkhal: 1/215.

was granted permission to narrate aHadith by academic stalwarts like Hafiz AbulHasan Abdul Ghafir alFarsi and Allamah Abul Qasim Mehmood bin Umar alZamakhshari, the author of Kashhaf. He writes that even we have received permission to narrate aHadith from her."[1]

Shahdah bint Abi Nasar (God have mercy upon her):

She was a scholar and a good writer. Ibn Khallikan writes:

سَمِعَ عَلَيْهَا خَلْقٌ كَثِيْرٌ۔

"A good number of people have learnt aHadith from her."

He says, "She had received '*Sama'a aali*' which means that she had permission to narrate Hadith in such a way that the chain of people narrating a particular Hadith from the Prophet ﷺ is shortened. Scholars of Hadith regard this as a great achievement and matter of pride. She had studied Hadith from the leading scholars of her time. She got fair renown and her name spread far and wide. She passed away in the year 574 AH.[2]

Moving on from the individual to the collective state of ladies, it is stated in the biography of Umme Jaafar, the daughter of Caliph Mansoor and the wife of Haroon Rashid that there were a hundred slave girls in her palace who had memorized the Qur'an. They were all required to recite a tenth of the Qur'an every day, which made the palace reverberate with the recitation of the Qur'an just as a bee hive buzzes with the sound of bees.[3]

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[1] Ibn Khallikan, Wafiat alA'ayan: 2/92.
[2] Ibn Khallikan, Wafiat alA'ayan: 2/172.
[3] Ibn Khallikan, Wafiat alA'ayan: 2/70.

If the slave girls of that era had memorized the Qur'an, you can well imagine the academic stature of other ladies living in that age.

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Muslim Women
(Religious, Social and Political Services)

The ladies of the first generation were not dissociated from social life; they used to take due interest in its issues. They have played a major role in the call and propagation of Islam, social work and political fields, and have even contributed towards the establishment of Islam. This chapter discusses their contribution in these spheres.

Calling to Islam and its Propagation:

Accepting or not accepting Islam is not an ordinary choice having no effect on one's life. Rather, it is such a big choice that one's life in this world and the hereafter are dependent upon it. Those who accept the religion of God are under obligation to convey it to others and make its importance known to the world. This responsibility needs to be shouldered by both-men as well as ladies, and the spread of Islam around the globe was a result of both of them realizing their responsibility and acting towards it. We present here a couple of instances to show how Muslim ladies have fulfilled this responsibility against all odds:

Umme Saleem bint Mulhaan, the mother of Anas (God be pleased with them) was known for her wit and wisdom. Allamah Ibn Abdul Birr writes about her:

كَانَتْ مِنْ عُقَلَاءِ النِّسَاءِ۔

"She was among the intelligent and wise ladies"[1]

كَانَتْ مِنْ فَاضِلَاتِ الصَّحَابِيَات۔

She is counted among the knowledgeable and virtuous lady companions."[2]

She was a very righteous and pious lady. The Prophet ﷺ once said, "I was beholding Paradise when I heard someone's footsteps. I asked whose footsteps they were. I was told that they were those of Ameesa'a (mother of Anas)."[3]

She was amongst the first to accept Islam in Madinah. Her husband, Malik bin Nasr was not in Madinah at that time. He came to know about it once he returned home. He asked her if she had turned apostate. She replied, "No, I have professed faith on Muhammad ﷺ." Anas bin Malik was in her laps. She used to teach him to recite the Islamic declaration of faith. Seeing this, her husband retorted, "Do not spoil my son's religion as well." She replied, "I am not spoiling his religion (rather, I am teaching him the correct religion)."

She kept inviting her husband to Islam, but he did not accept it. Enraged, he migrated to Syria and stayed there till his last breath.[4]

After her husband's death, the illustrious companion, Abu Talha sent her a marriage proposal. However, he had not accepted Islam till then. Umme Saleem told him that she couldn't marry her since he was a polytheist and she was a Muslim. She told her

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[1] Ibn Abdul Birr, alIstiaab: 4/494

[2] Nawawi, Tahzeeb alAsma'a wa alLughaat: 2/363.

[3] Bukhari, Kitaab Fazail Ashaab Fazail anNabi, Baab Munaqib Umar. Muslim, Kitaab alFazail, Baab Fazail Umme Saleem.

[4] Ibn Abdul Birr, alIstiaab: 4/494.

that they couldn't get married until he accepted Islam as well. There are many narrations that recount the manner in which she explained the ills of polytheism and the authenticity of monotheism to him. She said, "Think about it! What is the reality of these idols of wood and stone that you worship? A craftsman of a certain tribe picked up a stone from the ground and sculpted an idol out of it. A certain carpenter picked up a piece of wood from the ground and carved a statue out of it. These idols and statues can neither benefit you nor cause you any harm. If you wish, you can burn this wooden statue to ashes. You should feel ashamed at prostrating before it". This conversation was apparently spread over several occasions. His mind began to gradually open up to Islam. On one such occasion, he told her, "I have understood your point. I now accept Islam". At this, Umme Saleem told him that since he has accepted Islam, they can now get married. They were thus married, and Umme Saleem was so overjoyed with his reversion to Islam that she decided to forego her *mehr*.[1]

Speech is not the sole medium of propagating Islam. A man's character and firm conviction is also a great tool in this cause. A man's steadfastness on a particular ideology, his willingness to sacrifice everything for it and his passionate desire to see it get established are at times much more effective than his speech and serve as a means to influence the greatest of men. The steadfastness and unwavering conviction of Muslim women have overpowered the staunchest enemies of Islam, compelling them to give it a serious thought and eventually accept it.

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[1] For details, refer Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/426,427.

Umar (God be pleased with him) had been a fierce adversary of Islam in the initial years. There are certain narrations that inform us that there were a few episodes that had left a deep mark on his mind, paving the way for his acceptance of Islam. Allow me to relate two such incidents:

1. Aamir bin Rabiyah and his wife, Laila bint Abi Khaismah (Umme Abdullah) were among the first to accept Islam. They were among those Muslims who migrated to Abyssinia when the situation in Makkah turned unbearable. Laila bint Abi Khaismah narrates: We had made all preparations for the journey. Aamir had gone out for some work when Umar bin Khattab passed by. When he saw our bags packed, he asked, 'Umme Abdullah! Are you migrating away?' I replied, 'Yes, by God! We shall move away from here and settle elsewhere. Let us see what avenues of relief God opens up for us. You people have caused us a lot of trouble.' Umar simply said, 'God be with you' and left. I could see him getting overawed like I had never seen before. I suppose he was saddened to see us leave Makkah. When Aamir returned home, I told him, 'You would have been astonished to see the shock and grief on Umar's face'. He asked me if I was getting hopeful of him embracing Islam. I replied in the affirmative, but he was absolutely hopeless in this regard, given Umar's firm and unyielding nature. He said that Umar would not accept Islam until Khattab's donkey would accept it.[1]

[1] Ibn Hisham, alSeerat anNabwiyah: 1/380. Ibn Atheer alJuzri, Usd alGhaba: 7/249, Ibn Hajar, alIsabah: 8/303.

Probably it was their steadfastness on their ideology despite their helplessness and victimization and the tortures they had to face, and their willingness to migrate for its sake leaving behind home and relatives that had had an effect on Umar and he must have been trying to understand why all this was happening. What exactly is the crime for which they are being so dreadfully punished?

2. Umar's sister, Fatimah bint Khattab and her husband, Saeed bin Zaid (God be pleased with them) had embraced Islam much before him. They had, however, not disclosed this out of fear of Umar. Umar was quite upset that the Prophet ﷺ was criticizing the religion of his forefathers, calling them ignorant and misguided and was causing the families of the Quraish to fall apart. One day, he decided to finish off the Prophet ﷺ and his companions with his sword so that this entire affair comes to an end. On the way, he met Naeem bin Abdullah. When he came to know of Umar's sinister intentions, he counseled him not to proceed with his plans. He told him that if he were to hurt Muhammad (ﷺ), the tribe of Abd Munaf would not leave him alive. He also told him that if he detests Muhammad and his religion so much, he should rather go and check with his own sister and brother-in-law as they too have accepted Islam and had become his followers. All his anger now got diverted towards his sister and brother-in-law. He rushed towards their house. Khabbab used to visit Fatimah to teach her the Qur'an. At that moment, he was teaching the couple Surah TaHa. When he

approached their house, Umar could hear the Qur'an being recited. He dashed in and asked about the recitation he had overheard. He was told that it was nothing worth a mention. He retorted, "I have information that you folks have also sided with Muhammad". Saying so, he started beating Saeed bin Zaid. When his sister tried to intervene, she got hit as well but the wounds could not subdue them. Instead, their religious passions got aroused and they said, "Yes, we have believed in God and His messenger. You can do whatever you want". Their resoluteness baffled Umar. He felt remorseful seeing his sister bleeding. He calmed down and asked them to show him what they were reading. His sister replied that he was unclean because of associating false deities with God and that only clean people can touch that book. Umar took a bath and began reciting Surah TaHa. It moved his heart and he went to the Prophet ﷺ and embraced Islam.[1]

There have also been cases where the wife had accepted Islam and the husband delayed it or did not accept it at all. These ladies used to be persistent upon their faith despite lacking their husbands' support.

3. Abul Aas was the nephew of Lady Khadijah (God be pleased with them). Lady Khadijah had brought him up as a son. He was married to the Prophet's ﷺ daughter, Lady Zainab (God be pleased with her) before he was commissioned as a prophet. He was renowned for his righteousness, nobility and honesty even in the days of ignorance. However, he had not embraced Islam till a few days before the

[1] Ibn Hisham, alSeerat alNabwiyah: 1/381-384.

conquest of Makkah. Lady Zainab migrated to Madinah after the Battle of Badr. Thus, he stayed with her for fifteen years after the dawn of Islam.

[For details, refer Ibn Hisham, alSeerat alNabwiyah: 2/269-270]

There is no doubt that the Prophet, Lady Khadijah and Lady Zainab must have exhausted all attempts to reason with him and invite him to Islam. Although Abul Aas (God be pleased with him) embraced Islam much later, it is obvious that these attempts have had been instrumental in bringing him to Islam.

4. Umme Hakeem bint Harith (God be pleased with her) had participated in the Battle of Uhud from the disbelievers' side. She accepted Islam after the conquest of Makkah, but her husband, Ikramah bin Abu Jahl fled to Yemen. She approached the Prophet ﷺ and obtained amnesty for her husband. She then took the leave of the Prophet and went to Yemen, got in touch with her husband and brought him back to Makkah. She presented him before the Prophet, upon which he accepted Islam.[1]
5. Khalid bin Walid's sister, Fakhtah bint Walid (God be pleased with her) embraced Islam after the conquest of Makkah. However, her husband, Safwan bin Umaiyyah fled towards Yemen to commit suicide, planning to drown himself in the sea. Ameer bin Wahab obtained amnesty on his behalf from the Prophet ﷺ. It took a month for him to come back. The Prophet did not dissolve the marriages of

[1] Ibn Hisham, alSeerat alNabwiyah: 4/59,67. Ibn Abdul Birr, allstiaab: 4/486. Ibn Atheer, Usd alGhaba: 7/309

Fakhtah and Umme Hakeem with their respective husbands, Safwan and Ikramah.[1]

6. Umme Hani (God be pleased with her) was the daughter of the Prophet's ﷺ uncle, Abu Talib and the sister of Ali (God be pleased with him). She accepted Islam after the conquest of Makkah, but her husband, Hubairah fled to Najran and stayed there till his death. He was not willing to forsake his ancestors' religion till his last breath.[2]

We can understand from the above examples that Muslim ladies did not take into consideration their husbands' wishes before embracing Islam. They showed utmost patience and wisdom in explaining Islam to them and inviting them, and have convinced the biggest of adversaries to accept Islam. They ran from pillar to post to seek pardon for their husbands and obtained amnesty for them against all odds. Thus, they fulfilled their duties of inviting them to Islam and got them closer to the success of this world and the next, despite the fact that they were hitherto miles away from it.

Social Relations:

The ladies of the first generation were not disconnected or aloof from society; they participated in its joys and sorrows, its ease and difficulties. The Prophet ﷺ had laid great emphasis on their cordial relations with their neighbours. Abu Hurairah (God be pleased with him) narrates that a person once told the

[1] Ibn Hisham, alSeerat alNabwiyah: 4/66-67. Ibn Abdul Birr, alIstiaab: 4/447. Ibn Hajar, alIsabah: 8/257

[2] Ibn Hisham, alSeerat alNabwiyah: 4/69. Ibn Abdul Birr, alIstiaab: 4/517-518. Ibn Hajar, alIsabah fi Tamyeez alAsahabah: 8/485-486.

Prophet ﷺ that it is known that a certain lady offers a lot of prayers, observes fasts and spends a lot in charity, but troubles her neighbours with her foul and uncouth language. The Prophet ﷺ exclaimed that she would be resigned to hell. The man said, "There is another lady about whom it is known that she does not offer a lot of supererogatory prayers or fasts and gives a piece of cheese in the name of charity, but she is well-mannered, does not harm her neighbours. The Prophet ﷺ said, "She would be in Paradise."[1]

The ladies of this generation used to assist each other, sympathize with each other, show their love and empathy for each other and help each other in all possible ways.

Lady Asma'a narrates that when she was married to Zubair (God be pleased with them), she had to do all the household work. She says,

لَمْ اَكُنْ اُحْسِنُ اَخْبِزُ فَكَانَ يَخْبِزُلِيْ جَارَاتٌ مِنَ الْاَنْصَارِ وَ كُنَّ نِسْوَةَ صِدقٍ-

"I couldn't make proper rotis. Hence, my neighbours who belonged to the Ansar used to make rotis for me. They were very sincere ladies."[2]

It is known about Lady Asma'a that whenever a lady suffering from fever was brought before her, she used to supplicate for her and sprinkle some cold water on her neck. She would say, "The Prophet has taught us to douse the fever with cold water".[3]

Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas (God be pleased with him) narrates that we were returning from the cemetery in

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[1] alTargheeb wa alTarheeb: 3/242.
[2] Muslim: Kitaab asSalaam, Baab Jawaz Ardaf alMaraat alAjnabiyah.
[3] Bukhari: Kitaab atTibb, Baab alHamaa mann feeh jahannam.

the company of the Prophet ﷺ after a funeral. When the Prophet reached his house, he saw a lady approaching. I assume that he must have recognized her by her gait, as she was Lady Fatimah (God be pleased with her). When she came closer, he asked her why she was out of her house. She replied that she had been to the aggrieved family to offer her condolences. He asked her if she had been to the cemetery as well. She exclaimed, "God forbid! How could I have gone there? You have forbidden us to do so." The Prophet told her that she would have sinned if she would have gone there.[1]

If there are no moral apprehensions involved, such cordial relations can be forged between men and women as well. We find such examples in the lives of the Prophet ﷺ and the blessed companions:

Asma'a bint Yazeed (God be pleased with her) narrates that a few of us ladies were sitting in the masjid when the Prophet ﷺ came to us and greeted us.[2]

In one narration, it is mentioned that the Prophet ﷺ then asked them to refrain from being ungrateful to their husbands.[3]

We have a similar narration by Jareer bin Abdullah (God be pleased with him) in which he says that the Prophet ﷺ greeted some ladies whom he happened to pass by.[4]

Sahl bin Sa'ad (God be pleased with him) says that we used to be very happy on Fridays. There was an elderly

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[1] Abu Dawood: Kitaab alJanaiz, Baab fi alTa'ziyah This was probably an initial guideline. There are certain other narrations that prove the permissibility of ladies visiting the graveyard.

[2] Abu Dawood: Kitaab alAadaab, Baab asSalaam ala anNisa'. Tirmizi: Kitaab alIstaizaan, Baab ma ja'a fi alTasleem ala anNisa'.

[3] Bukhari: alAadab alMufrad: 2/490.

[4] Musnad Ahmad: 4/363.

lady whom we used to greet after offering the Friday prayers. She used to prepare a semi-solid dish out of flour and beetroot and offer it to us[1].

Apart from the fact that it is permissible to greet ladies, we also learn from this Hadith that ladies can be hospitable and play host to men.

The Prophet ﷺ had once told Umme Warqah (God be pleased with her) that God would grace her with martyrdom. Everyone had faith in this prophecy. Caliph Umar (God be pleased with him) used to tell his associates, "Let us pay a visit to the martyrs" and he used to pay her a visit.[2]

Visiting the sick is a moral responsibility and Islam has been very particular about it. It leads to healthy social relations and fosters love between people. The Prophet visited not only men who would fall sick, but ladies as well:

Jabir (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet once paid a visit to a lady whose name was Umm alSa'ib or Umm alMasaib. She was not feeling well. The Prophet asked her, "What is the matter? Why are you shivering?" She replied, "Sir, I have fever. May God curse it." The Prophet replied, "Do not say ill about the fever. It wipes off the sins of men just like a furnace cleans the rust off iron."[3]

The aunt of Hakeem bin Hazaam, Ummul Ala'a (God be pleased with them) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ paid

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[1] Bukhari: Kitaab alIstainzaan. Imam Bukhari has included this Hadith in the chapter: Tasleem arRijaal ala anNisa' wa anNisa' ala arRijaal (Men and women greeting each other). This means that this act finds evidence in the Hadith.

[2] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/457.

[3] Muslim: Kitaab alBirr wasSilah, Baab Thawaab alMomin fi ma Yaseebah min Marz.

me a visit when I was feeling sick. He said, "O Ummul Ala'a! Receive good tidings, for God wipes off the sins of a believer because of his illness, just as fire wipes off the impurities from iron."[1]

Fatimah Khuzaiyah narrates that the Prophet ﷺ paid a visit to a lady from the Ansar who was not feeling well. He asked her how she was feeling. She replied that she was well, but her disease was giving her a lot of trouble. The Prophet advised her to have patience and said, "Diseases purify a man of his sins in the same way as a piece of iron is purified of its rust when put in the fire."[2]

Hasan Basari (Goid have mercy upon him) says that:

كُنَّ النِّسَاءُ يُسَلِّمْنَ عَلَى الرِّجَالِ-

"Women used to greet men."[3]

Harith bin Ubaidullah Ansari relates that Umme Darda once visited a sick person from the Ansar who used to stay close to alMasjid anNabawi.[4]

Ibraheem bin Abi Ablah relates that his wife was not feeling well. 'Those days, I used to visit Umme Darda and she used to enquire about my wife's health. I used to tell her about her sickness. She used to arrange food for me and I used to have it. On one such occasion, when she asked me about her health, I replied that she was feeling much better now. She said that she used to offer me food because my wife was not feeling well, and now that she is no longer sick, she would no longer arrange for my food.[5]

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[1] Abu Dawood: Kitaab alJanaiz, Baab Iyadat anNisa'.
[2] alTargheeb wa alTarheeb: 4/152.
[3] Bukhari: alAdab alMufrad: 2/490.
[4] Bukhari: Kitaab alMarza, Baab Iyadat anNisa'arRijaal and alAdab alMufrad: 1/647.
[5] Bukhari: alAdab alMufrad: 1/606.

From these examples, we learn that ladies can visit sick men and even arrange for their food in their homes if they are facing some domestic problems.

Community Service:

Islam has not prevented women from serving the society and contributing to the society's development and prosperity. They can participate in these endeavours, and they have indeed done so. Let us see a few examples:

There was a time when alMasjid anNabawi did not have a pulpit. A lady submitted to the Prophet ﷺ: "I have a slave who is a carpenter. If you please, allow me to have a raised seat prepared for you on which you can sit while delivering the sermon". The Prophet replied, "Yes, have a pulpit prepared".[1]

There was an acute water scarcity in Makkah. A single bag of water was being sold for a dinar. Zubaidah bin Jafar had a ten-mile long canal constructed to solve the water crisis in Makkah. This required making way through mountains and doing away with huge boulders. The architect of the canal informed Zubaidah that this project would involve a lot of expenditure. She replied that the project should be completed at all costs, even if a single strike of the hammer costs a dinar. This monumental project was thus completed.[2]

Politics:

While we do not find women holding high government posts in the first generation, they were not

[1] Bukhari: Kitaab asSalaat, Baab alIsta'anah bilJabbar wasSana'a.
[2] Ibn Khallikan, Wafaat alA'ayaan: 2/70.

entirely removed from politics either. They used to keep an eye on contemporary political developments. They strived and struggled to establish the Islamic state, offered their sacrifices for the same and admonished and advised the Rightly Guided Caliphs and the governors and took a part in politics as and when required.

It is an undeniable fact that ladies used to accompany the Prophet ﷺ and the companions in battles and assist them in various ways. We would suffice at presenting a few examples here:

Allamah Ibn Abdul Birr writes about Laila alGhaffariyah (God be pleased with her):

كَانَتْ تَخْرُجُ مَعَ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ فِيْ مَغَازِيهِ تُدَاوِيْ الْجَرْحٰى وَ تَقُوْمُ عَلَى الْمَرْضٰى۔

"She used to accompany the Prophet in his battles, bandaged the wounds of the soldiers and nursed them."[1]

Ibn Sa'ad recounts the services of Umme Saleet (God be pleased with her) in the following words:

اَسْلَمَتْ اُمُّ سَلِيْطٍ وَ بَايَعَتْ وَ شَهِدَتْ خَيْبَرَ وَ حُنَيْنًا۔

"Umme Saleet accepted Islam, pledged her allegiance to it and participated in the battles of Khaibar and Hunain."[2]

Umar (God be pleased with him) avers that:

كَانَتْ تَزْفِرُ لَنَا الْقِرَبَ يَوْمَ أُحُدٍ۔

"She used to fill water in flasks and get them to us during the Battle of Uhud."[3]

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[1] allstiaab: 4/463-464.
[2] Ibn Sa'ad, alTabqaat alKubra: 8/419.
[3] Ibn Abdul Birr, allstiaab: 4/493.

When we read these accounts, we can understand that every lady- big or small- used to feel happy and pleased with the success of Islam and Muslims. On one occasion, when the Prophet ﷺ was returning from a battle, a dark-skinned slave-girl came to him and told him that she had taken a vow to express her joy by beating the *daf* (a form of one-sided handheld drum) and singing in his presence if he were to return safely from the battle. The Prophet asked her to fulfil her vow only if she had indeed vowed to do so. She confirmed that she had indeed vowed to do so. At this, the Prophet sat down and listened to her as she celebrated his safe return by singing and beating the *duf*.[1]

Muslim ladies have even advised the Caliph of their time. Amir Mu'awiyah had once written to Lady Aishah (God be pleased with them) to offer him a brief advice. Lady Aishah wrote to him the following words of the Prophet ﷺ that contain beneficial guidelines for a ruler:

مَن الْتَمَسَ رِضا اللهِ بِسَخَطِ النَّاسِ كَفَاهُ اللهُ مُؤْنَةَ النَّاسِ وَمَنْ اِلْتَمَسَ رِضَا النَّاسِ بِسَخَطِ اللهِ وَكَلَهُ اللهُ اِلَى النَّاسِ۔

"He who seeks the pleasure of God by displeasing people, God would protect him from the evil of men, but he who seeks the pleasure of men by displeasing God, God would leave him to them (to treat him as they please)."[2]

Qasim bin Muhammad narrates that Amir Mu'awiyah visited Lady Aishah on the occasion of Hajj. The only other person in their presence was Zakwan, her slave. She told Amir Mu'awiyah, "You

[1] Tirmizi: Kitaab alManaqib, Baab Manaqib Umar Abi Hafs. Abu Dawood: Kitaab anNazoor.

[2] Tirmizi: Abwab alZuhd, Baab 64.

had my brother Muhammad killed. He had participated in the battle between you and Ali (God be pleased with them) on the side of the latter and was martyred in Egypt. Did it not occur to you that I can have got you killed as well?" Amir Mu'awiyah acknowledged this. In another narration, it is mentioned that he replied, "I expect that you would not do so." Thereafter, Lady Aishah offered him some advice and encouraged him to abide by Islamic law.[1]

Burairah was a slave girl. Lady Aishah had purchased her and set her free. The Ummayad Caliph, Abdul Malik bin Marwan says that I used to attend her discourse before becoming the Caliph. She used to tell me that she noticed some good qualities in me. She would say: I feel that you would rise to power and get the caliphate. If you become the Caliph, see to it that you do not shed blood, for I have heard the Prophet ﷺ say: "A person would be shown Paradise and then taken away from its gates because of being guilty of shedding the blood of a Muslim without right, no matter how little."[2]

Allamah Ibn Abdul Birr writes about Shafa'a bint Abdullah (God be pleased with her):

اَسْلَمَتِ الشِّفَاءُ قَبْلَ الْهِجْرَةِ فَهِيَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرَاتِ الْاَوَّلِ وَ بَا يَعَتِ النَّبِيَّ ﷺ وَكَانَتْ مِنْ عُقَلَاءِ النِّسَاءِ وَفُضَلَائِهِنَّ --- وَ كَانَ عُمَرُ يُقَدِّمُهَا فِي الرَّأْيِ وَ يَرْضَاهَا وَ يُفَضِّلُهَا وَ رُبَّمَا وَلَّاهَا شَيْئًا مِّنْ اَمْرِ السُّوْقِ۔

"Shafa'a had embraced Islam before the migration. She was among the first batch of migrants. She had pledged allegiance to Islam at the hands of the Prophet ﷺ. She was among the intelligent, intellectual and virtuous ladies... Umar (God be pleased with him)

[1] Zahabi: Seer A'alaam alNabla'a: 2/131.
[2] Ibn Abdul Birr, alIstiaab: 4/358.

used to seek her advice, keep her happy and preferred her above others. He used to make her in-charge of the markets as well."[1]

This tells us that she was recognized as an intelligent, wise, knowledgeable and virtuous lady. Caliph Umar used to take her advice seriously and had entrusted her with certain civic responsibilities.

Fatimah bint Qais (God be pleased with her) is a well-known companion. She is counted among the first people to migrate to Madinah. Ibn Abdul Birr writes:

كَانَتْ ذَاتَ جَمَالٍ وَ عَقْلٍ وَ كَمَالٍ وَ فِيْ بَيْتِهَا اِجْتَمَعَ اَصْحَابُ الشُّوْرٰى عِنْدَ قَتْلِ عُمَرَ ابْنِ الْخَطَّابِؓ وَخَطَبُوْا خُطبَهُمُ الْمَاثُوْرَةَ قَالَ الزُّبَيْرُ وَ كَانَتْ اِمْأَةً نَجُوْدًا۔

"She was a beautiful and intelligent lady. The members of the legislative council had assembled at her house after the martyrdom of Caliph Umar and delivered the speeches that have been recorded in history. Zubair ibn Bakaar testifies that she was a righteous lady."[2]

This shows that everyone had faith in her insight and moral uprightness. It was *her* house where the debate on succession of Caliph Umar was held by members of the legislative council after he was martyred. She was apparently involved in those proceedings and had knowledge of the unfolding events.

The fact remains that Muslim ladies have had exemplary roles to play in the spheres of religion, morals, character, virtue, knowledge, politics, culture and society. The services they have rendered for Islam

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[1] Ibn Abdul Birr, alIstiaab: 4/423,424. Ibn Hajar, alIsabah fi Tamyeez: 8/201-202.

[2] Ibn Abdul Birr, alIstiaab: 4/454.

The Issue of Employment of Muslim Ladies in the Present Age

The Islamic Fiqh Academy [New Delhi] had issued a questionnaire regarding the employment of Muslim ladies in the present age. The following article was written in its reply. The questions are those that have been put up by the Fiqh Academy.

The duties of men and women in a family:

The man is usually the head of the family. He protects it, manages its affairs and arranges for the finances and other needs of his wife and kids, and at times his close relatives as well. He looks into their education and grooming and bears the expenses of their weddings. On the other hand, the woman looks into the domestic needs of the house which include taking care of the house and the kids and guarding her husband's wealth. This very system of family was prevalent among the Arabs as well. However, there were certain points of imbalance in their system. Neither were the roles of the members well-defined, nor were their responsibilities made clear. There were several instances of injustice. The woman used to bear with all this owing to her natural weaknesses. Islam continued with the family system and provided it with firm foundations, purged it of all injustice and oppression, specified the roles of men and women, did away with the absolute superiority of man, took into

consideration the weaknesses of women and provided her with legal safeguards. For the sake of the family's well being and strength, it asked men to take care of the woman's expenses. In other words, providing her with food and other essentials was declared to be a right that a woman can exercise upon man. One of the many points of wisdom in this arrangement was to allow the woman to concentrate on the domestic affairs of the house.

The tendency of educated women to opt for jobs:

The modern age has witnessed a lot of social changes and the necessities of life are ever-expanding. In this scenario, it is considered imperative that women should also earn money just as the men do. Women today want to be financially independent themselves and do not want to depend upon the husband or some other family member, and she has ample opportunities to do so.

Today, many Muslim ladies, especially the educated ones, think on these lines and are getting engaged in the financial sector. I have tried to answer certain questions in this regard....

Question 1:

What does Islamic law have to say about ladies earning money?

Reply:

Islam has not burdened the ladies with financial concerns. She has not been compelled to earn a living under normal circumstances. At the same time, her financial pursuits cannot be frowned upon. Provision (*rizq*) has been called God's bounty (*fazl*) in the

Qur'an and it has asked us to seek it. It has been mentioned in Surah alJumu'ah:

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلٰوةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللهِ

"When the prayer has been concluded, (you have been allowed to) disperse in the land and seek from the bounty of Allah." *[Surah alJumu'ah ayat 10]*

Ladies are also entitled to seek God's bounty. There is nothing to prove that only men have been given this right and that women have been kept deprived of it.

This can be seen from another perspective as well. A lady tends to receive money from various sources. This includes *meher* (money given to the bride) and inherited money, the amount of which can be quite big at times. She can also get money in the form of gifts; she can be the supervisor of some public property. She has the right to invest her money and seek profits and dividends. She also has the right to spend it at will. Allamah ibn Qudamah has stated the ruling of Imam Abu Haneefah, Imam Shafi'i, Ibn alManzar and- according to one narration- Imam Ahmad that:

لِلْمَرْأَةِ الرَّشِيْدَةِ التَّصَرُّفُ فِيْ مَا لِهَا كُلِّهَا بِالتَّبَرُّعِ وَالْمُعَاوَضَةِ۔

"A smart woman is entitled to spend her entire wealth. She can spend it on acts of virtue and invest it to get returns from it as well."[1]

Imam Malik has expressed his dissent to this opinion. There is one narration that suggests that Imam Ahmad has ruled that a woman cannot spend more than a third of her wealth without the permission of her

[1] Ibn Qudamah, alMughni: 6/602 Verified by Dr. Abdullah bin Abdul Muhsin al Turki and Dr. Abdul Fatah Muhammad alHalu, Cairo, 1992 CE.

husband. Ibn Qudamah has conclusively proved the weakness of this opinion.[1]

If the wealth of a young girl is deposited with her guardian, then it would be returned to her once she comes of age and becomes smart enough, even if she is not married. This is the ruling of Ata'a bin Abi Rabah, Imam Thauri, Imam Abu Haneefah, Imam Shafi'i, Abu Thaur and Ibn alManzar.[2]

Imam Malik and (as per one narration) Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal opine that her wealth would not be given to her before her marriage. Ibn Qudamah has criticized this view and made clear its weak points.

Question 2:

Does Islamic law require women to arrange for the provisions (of herself or her kids)?

Reply:

Under normal circumstances, Islam has not burdened women with financial responsibilities. Her provisions are the responsibility of her father from the time she is born to the time she gets married. After marriage, it is her husband's responsibility to provide her with food, clothes and other necessities. However, in certain circumstances and to various extents, even she is required to earn money, some examples of which have been enlisted below:

The jurists have made it clear that if the kids have lost their father, then their mother is obliged to provide for them. Allamah ibn Qudamah Hanbali writes:

ان الام تجب نفقتها ويجب عليها ان تنفق على ولدها إذا لم يكن له اب و بهذا قال أبو حنيفة والشافعي۔

[1] Ibid Pages 602-604.

[2] Ibn Qudamah, alMughni: 6/201-202.

"Children are obliged to provide for their mother. Similarly, the mother is also obliged to provide for her children if they are orphans. Apart from Imam Ahmad, Imam Abu Haneefah and Imam Shafi'i also share this opinion.[1]

Imam Malik does not concur with this view. According to him, only the *asbaat* have been obliged to provide for the necessities. Since the mother is not counted as an *asbah*, neither is she required to provide for her children, nor are the children required to provide for their mother.[2]

Ibn Qudamah further states:

فان اعسر الأب وجبت النفقة على الأم، ولم ترجع بها عليه ان أيسر۔

"If the father is poor and is unable to bear the expenses of the children, then the mother is obliged to provide for their expenses. This is not a form of loan. Hence, if her husband becomes prosperous later, she cannot ask him to pay it back to her."[3]

It has also been said that:

ام معسرة وجدّة موسرة النفقة على الجدة۔

"If the mother is poor and the grandmother is well-off, then the grandmother would be obliged to provide for the necessities."[4]

As for the grown-up child who is unable to fend for himself, it has been mentioned in the authentic book of the Hanafi school of thought that:

وتجب نفقة الابنة البالغة والابن الزمن على ابويه اثلاثًا، على الأب الثلثان وعلى الأم الثلث۔

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[1] Ibn Qudamah, alMughni: 11/303.
[2] Ibid 11/373.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Ibid 11/376.

"Both the mother and father would be obliged to bear the expenses of the girl who has grown up and the boy who has grown up but is disabled and handicapped. Two thirds of the expenses would be borne by the father and a third by the mother."[1]

In the same way, it has also been said that if the brother is poor, the sisters are required to provide for him according to their share of inheritance. The real sister would bear 3/5 and the step sisters would bear 1/5 each.[2]

The topic at hand does not relate to the opinions of our respectable jurists and their respective arguments[3]. The purpose of discussing these issues is only to show that there can be situations in which ladies too are required to provide for the expenses of their family members in light of Islamic law, and that the majority of jurists agree to this.

Apart from the legal aspect of this matter, the natural feelings of love, compassion and empathy that thrive among members of a family also need to be considered. Islam encourages and strengthens these emotions. A wife is not obliged to meet the expenses of her husband. But it is a sign of high moral values if a rich wife helps her husband with his expenses. Islam promises great rewards for such an act. Abdullah ibn Mas'ood (God be pleased with him) was financially weak. His wife used to bear his expenses, as well as the

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[1] Hidayah ma'a Nasb alRayah: 3/407, Darul Kutub alIlmiyah, Lebanon, 1996 CE.

[2] Hidayah ma'a Fath alQadeer Leibin alHumam: 4/381, Darul Kutub alIlmiyah, Lebanon, 1995 CE.

[3] Those interested in a detailed discussion may refer: Qurtubi, alJama'e alAhkaam alQur'an, Vol 2, Section 3, pages 111-113, Darul Kutub alIlmiyah, Lebanon, 1988 CE

expenses of her orphaned kids (those from a previous marriage). She once asked the Prophet ﷺ:

أَيَجْزِئُ عَنِّي أَنْ أُنْفِقَ عَلَى زَوْجِي وَأَيْتَامٍ فِي حِجْرِي۔

"Would it be sufficient for me to spend on my husband and my orphaned kids who are under my care?"

There was one more lady who had asked him the same question.

لَهُمَا أَجْرَانِ: أَجْرُ الْقَرَابَةِ وَأَجْرُ الصَّدَقَةِ۔

"The Prophet told them that they would get twice the reward- one for helping family members and the other for charity."[1]

Umme Salmah (God be pleased with her) asked the Prophet ﷺ if she would be rewarded by God if she were to spend on her departed husband, Abu Salmah's children who are her own children and she cannot leave them alone. The Prophet replied:

نعم، لَكِ أَجْرُ مَا أَنْفَقْتِ عَلَيْهِمْ۔

"Spend on them. You would be rewarded for whatever you spend on them."[2]

There are times when women have to shoulder the moral responsibility of helping out their family members. These aHadith tell us that she would be eligible for unparalleled rewards if she helps her husband and other family members in their time of need. If a woman seeks to increase her wealth with this intention in mind, then it would certainly be counted as permissible and appreciable instead of being denounced as an impermissible thing to do.

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[1] Bukhari: Kitaab azZakaat, Baab azZakaat ala azZauj walAytaam. Muslim: Kitaab azZakaat, Baab Fazl anNufqah wa asSadqah ala alAqrabeen.

[2] Bukhari: Kitaab alNufqaat, Baab ala alWaris misla zalik.

Question 3:

What is the ruling regarding the case wherein a woman indulges in financial pursuits for the mere sake of raising her standard of living, passing her time or increasing her wealth and assets when the condition of the house is such that it can be- and is- managed on a limited budget?

Reply:

Islam has discouraged us from indulging in this world and exhausting our energies in its pursuit. Rather, it has taught us to be content at whatever we have. Having said that, if a person adopts fair means to earn money and spends it on a comfortable and luxurious life, he is allowed to do so, provided his financial pursuits do not make him neglectful of God. He should not usurp the rights of fellow human beings and lead a life of abject materialism. The pursuits of worldly life do not distract a righteous and pious person from the remembrance of God, prayers and spending in charity. Instead, he keeps trembling with the fear of God.

رِجَالٌ لَّا تُلْهِيهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَن ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ ۙ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ ﴿٣٧﴾

"(These are) men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allah and performance of prayer and giving of charity. They fear a Day in which the hearts and eyes will (fearfully) turn about." *[Surah anNoor ayat 37]*

Trade and business can fulfil a person's needs, and they can also make him prosperous, and both these things are usually sought after. The same applies to women. She would not be held reproachable if she adopts a permissible mode of business (within the

confines of Islamic limits) to buy herself a life of comfort. Islam has not made any distinction between men and women in this regard.

Question 4:

Is a woman required to obtain permission from her guardian/husband to adopt a means of earning money even if she limits her financial endeavours to her house/ works from home?

Reply:

Yes, it is necessary for a woman to obtain the permission of her husband if she wants to conduct some business from the confines of her home. This is because it is the husband who is legally responsible for the upkeep of his wife. She is not required to earn money per se. A man has been obligated to provide for the expenses of his wife because he consumes her time. In other words, a woman surrenders her time to her husband in lieu of those provisions.

It is mentioned in Hidayah that,

النفقة جزاء الا حتباس، فكل من كان محبوسا بحق مقصود لغيره كانت نفقته غليه۔

"The provisions are a remuneration to hold back the wife. If a person gives his time to benefit another person, it becomes incumbent upon the latter to provide for the former."

The explanation that has been given is that:

اصله القاضى والعامل فى الصدقات۔

"Her position is that of a judge and tax collector"[1]

The man-hours of a judge and a tax collector are obtained for the benefit of Muslims. Hence, their provisions are incumbent upon the state treasury. The

[1] Hidayah Awwaleen, Kitaab atTalaq, Baab anNufqah, page 417, Kitaabkhana Rashidiyah, Delhi, 1350 AH

same is the case with the provisions of the wife. When the woman devotes her time for her husband, she is not allowed to spend her time in any other activity without his permission.

Question 5:

Is a woman required to obtain permission from her husband/guardian if she needs to go out of her house to earn money? Would the ruling change if the woman has to travel or does not have to travel long enough (to be counted as a traveler in Islamic terminology), or does it matter whether she works in the day or in the night, or whether her husband/guardian provides for her expenses or not?

Reply:

When a woman is required to obtain the permission of her husband even when she works from home, then she is all the more required to obtain his permission if she wants to work outside. It is the prerogative of the husband to decide whether to allow her or not.

Allamah Ibn Qudamah Hanbali writes:

وللزوج منعها من الخروج الى مالها منه بد۔

"A man has the right to disallow his wife from going out of the house even for those tasks that are necessary."

He further adds,

ولا يجوز لها الخروج الا باذنه۔

"It is not permissible for a woman to leave the house without her husband's permission."[1]

He also says that the husband is legally entitled to disallow his wife from visiting her sick parents, but since not visiting one's sick parents goes against the

[1] Ibn Qudamah, alMughni: 10/224.

recommended values, he should allow her to go and visit them. In the same way, he can prevent his wife from visiting the masjid, but the Prophet ﷺ has asked husbands not to prevent them from doing so.[1]

There are explicit instructions in the Hadith that it is not appropriate for a woman to travel without a *mehram* (husband or close relative with whom her marriage is prohibited). There is a difference in opinion with regards the distance of this journey.

Abu Hurairah (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

لَا يحلّ لامرأة تُؤْمِنُ بِاللهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الآخِرِ، تُسَافِرُ مَسِيْرَةَ يَوْمٍ وَلَيْلَةٍ إِلَّا مَعَ ذِيْ مَحْرَمٍ عَلَيْهَا۔

"It is not lawful for a woman who believes in God and the last day to undertake a journey that extends to a day and a night without her mehram."

In this narration, women have been forbidden from undertaking a day-long journey without their *mehram*. Certain other narrations have mentioned journeys spanning two days and three days. However, Abdullah ibn Abbas (God be pleased with him) has narrated one Hadith that has no mention of the length/duration of the journey:

لَا تُسَافِرِ الْمَرْأَةُ الاّمَعَ ذِيْ مَحْرَمٍ۔

"A woman should not travel except in the company of her mehram."[2]

The scholars of Hadith clarify that the differences seen in the Hadith are because of the differences in the questions that the Prophet ﷺ was asked. It so happened

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[1] Ibn Qudamah alMughni: 10/224.

[2] Muslim: Kitaab alHajj, Baab Safar alMaraat ma'a mehram ilal Hajj waghairah.

that a lady asked him about a journey spanning three days, another lady asked him about a two-day journey and yet another woman about a day-long journey. At each occasion, the Prophet replied that it was impermissible for her to travel without her *mehram*. A Hadith recorded by Abu Dawood has the word '*bureed*' that signifies a journey of half a day. The narration of Abdullah ibn Abbas quoted above tells us that women are simply not allowed to travel without an accompanying *mehram*. All the narrations in this context should be considered subordinate to this narration.[1]

Modern amenities have made travelling much more convenient these days. Faster modes of transport are available, allowing a person to cover thousands of miles in just a few hours and reach another part of the globe. The needs of civilization have made travelling unavoidable and people tend to undertake many journeys- both short and long. There are chances of unrelated men and women travelling together, which can lead to women being molested. Hence, it cannot be said that it is absolutely safe for women to travel alone. It is always better for a woman to travel in the company of her husband or *mehram*. In the backdrop of the current scenario there is a need to think over this matter and arrive at a solution.

As far as the work-timings are concerned, we have day shifts as well as night shifts. Both have their own hazards. We cannot come up with a rule in this regard. Religious men and women should themselves decide upon the pros and cons and safety and dangers of a particular shift.

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[1] Nawawi, Sharah Muslim, Vol 5, Section 9, pages 87-88, Darul Kutub alIlmiyah, Lebanon, 1995 CE.

Coming to the final part of the question, it is the responsibility of the lady's husband/guardian to provide for her expenses. It is an altogether separate matter if he is unable to fulfil this responsibility or is shirking his responsibility. Such a condition does not come in the way of his prerogative of granting her or denying her permission to go out of the house.

Question 6:

What are the Islamic limits for women's employment?

Reply:

a. There are three important principles in this regard:
b. Neither a man nor a woman can get employed in a firm that conducts a business that goes against Islamic law. Eg. Working in a bank, dealing with alcohol and gambling and getting involved in other such acts that have been prohibited by the Qur'an and the Hadith.
c. The woman should be allowed to work by her husband/guardian.
d. Men and women should not mix freely with each other.

Question 7:

What would be the ruling regarding the veil if a woman is employed in an institution (educational or some other institution) where the entire staff consists of ladies and there is no man in the workplace, but the head of the institution happens to be a man?

If a woman works in a place that has male employees as well, to what extent should the women veil themselves? Also, is there a difference in the rulings regarding young and elderly women in this regard?

Reply:

Ladies can work in institutions where the entire staff consists of females and there is no man present where they work. If the head of the institution or the manager happens to be a man, it is permissible to speak to him while abiding by the limits set by Islam. Two issues need to be addressed in this regard, one of which relates to the extent of a woman's veil, while the other deals with women speaking to unrelated men:

a. As far as the question of veil is concerned, Islamic law requires her to cover her entire body. She cannot expose any part of her body in front of unrelated men. Abdullah ibn Mas'ood relates that the Prophet has said,

اَلْمَرْأَةُ عَوْرَةٌ، فَإِذَا خَرَجَتْ اِسْتَشْرَفَهَا الشَّيْطَانُ۔

"A lady should conceal herself. Satan casts glances on her when she comes out."[1]

This means that a woman should be covered by a veil. When she comes out of it, Satan starts playing his tricks. This can lead to the woman or someone else going wayward.

The jurists are divided on whether a lady is required to cover her face and hands as well or she can expose them in front of unrelated men. Allamah Ibn Qudamah Hanbali has presented both points of view and proved that a lady's hands and face are also included in her veil. I personally concur with the same.[2]

Hence, it is not permissible for a man to lay his eyes on any part of a woman's body. Allamah Ibn Qudamah Hanbali writes,

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[1] Tirmizi: Kitaab alRaza'a, Baab 18.

[2] Ibn Qudamah, alMughni: 9/498-500.

نظر الرجل الى الا جنبية من غير سبب فانه محرم الى جميعها۔

"It is forbidden for a man to see any part of an unrelated woman's body without there being an explicit need to do so."[1].

At the same time, it cannot be denied that a woman can expose her face and hands in front of unrelated men if there is any express need to do so; he can then see the same.

The Hanafi jurisprudence allows for this when it says that:

و ينظر من الأجنبية إلى وجهها وكفيها فقط للضّرورة۔

"A man can see the face and hands of an unrelated woman only if there is an explicit need to do so."[2]

Citing reference from Tatarkhaniyah, it is said that:

النظر إلى وجه الأجنبية الحرة ليس بحرا، ولكنه يكره لغير حاجة۔

"While it is not forbidden to see the face of a free unrelated woman, it is detestable to do so without having any valid reason to do so."[3]

These 'valid reasons' include:

1. If a man wishes to marry a lady, the Prophet ﷺ has asked him to see her if possible. Jabir (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

إذا خطب أحدكم المرأ ة فان استطاع أن ينظر إلى ما يدعوه إلى نكاحها فليفعل۔

"If a man is to marry a woman, he should see her before marrying her if it is possible, such that he would be convinced at marrying her."[4]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] adDur alMukhtaar ma'a Radd alMuhtaar: 9/531, Darul Kutub alIlmiyah, Lebanon, 1994 CE.

[3] Ibid page 532.

[4] Abu Dawood, Kitaab anNikah, Baab fi arRajul yanzar ila almaraat wa hua yareed tazweej'ha.

This, as mentioned in the Hanafi jurisprudence, refers to the face.[1]

All religious scholars are unanimous in this case.[2]

2. In certain situations, a woman is required to expose her hand beyond her wrist. Accordingly, maid servants who cook food or wash clothes at people's homes often have their forearms exposed till the elbows, and it is not unlawful to see them.[3]
3. A doctor is allowed to observe any part of a lady patient's body as part of his treatment. There is no restriction of hand or face in this case.[4]
4. Ibn Qudamah says that a male business associate or employer can see the face of his lady associate or employee in order to recognize her and seek recovery of losses from her. One report suggests that Imam Ahmad has disliked this, or has allowed this in case the lady happens to be an elderly person. Ibn Qudamah says that this is related to seeing her without any valid excuse:

فاما مع الحاجة وعدم الشهوة فلابأس۔

"However, there is no harm in seeing her if there is a need to do so and there is no involvement of lust."[5]

5. Similarly, there is a concession in matters of the veil as far as slave-girls are concerned.

الأمة ياح النظر منها إلى مايظهر غالباً۔

"It is permissible to see those parts of a slave-girl's body that are usually exposed."[6]

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[1] adDur alMukhtaar ma'a Radd alMuhtaar: 9/532.
[2] Ibn Qudamah, alMughni: 9/489.
[3] adDur alMukhtaar ma'a Radd alMuhtaar: 9/531.
[4] Ibid page 533.
[5] alMughni: 9/498.
[6] alMughni: 9/500.

6. A slave is allowed to look at the face and hands of his mistress if there is no lust involved. It would not be permissible to set an amorous gaze on her. According to Imam Malik and Imam Shafi'i, a slave is considered to be a *mehram*.[1]

This makes it clear that a woman can keep her hands and face uncovered and it is permissible for men to see those if there is a need to do so. The only thing that needs to be checked is that there should not be any sexual emotions attached to it and that man should not adopt a wrong attitude in this regard.

b. Now let us take up the issue of conversing with an unrelated lady:

Hanafi jurisprudence tells us that the veil includes the lady's voice as well.

إن صوت المرأة عورة على الراجح۔

"As per the accepted view, even the voice of the woman is included in the veil."[2]

It is a *Sunnah* to offer a greeting and necessary to reply to it. Similarly, it is a Sunnah to reply to a person who sneezes and says *Alhamdulillah* by saying *Yarhamuk Allah*. The Hanafi jurists have written:

ولا يكلّم الأجنبية إلا عجوزاً عطست أو سلّمت فيشمتها لايرد السلام عليها۔

"A person would not speak to an unrelated woman unless she happens to be an old lady. If she sneezes and says Alhamdulillah, he would respond by saying Yarhamuk Allah but he would not reply to her greeting with a loud voice."[3]

Another opinion that is presented is that:

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[1] adDur alMukhtaar ma'a Radd alMuhtaar: 9/532.
[2] adDur alMukhtaar ma'a Radd alMuhtaar: 9/531.
[3] Ibid.

يجوز الكلام المباح مع امرأة أجنبية۔

"It is allowed to speak permissible things with unrelated women."

It is also said that,

لا بأس بأن يتكلم مع النساء بما لا يحتاج اليه وليس هذا من الخوض فى مالا يعنيه، انما ذلک فى كلام فيه اثم۔

"There is nothing wrong if a man engages in a non-essential conversation with a woman. This is not a form of vain talk. Vain talk is a conversation that is sinful in nature."[1]

There is no doubt about the fact that Islam dislikes unrelated men and women speaking to each other. But it allows for such a conversation if there's a need to do so. A woman can approach a religious scholar to seek advice on religious matters, present herself before a judge and testify. The instructions laid down in the Qur'an in this matter for the wives of the Prophet apply to all women in general:

فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا ﴿٣٢﴾

"O wives of the Prophet, you are not like anyone among women. If you fear Allah, do not be too complaisant in speech, lest he in whose heart is disease should covet, but speak in an appropriate manner." *[Surah alAhzab ayat 32]*

Two things have been said in this ayat. The first thing is that a woman should not adopt such a soft and delicate form of speech while speaking to a stranger or unrelated man that would allow immoral thoughts to enter into a pervert man's mind and give him wrong signals. The second thing that is said is that the conversation should only revolve around things that are appropriate. Though there is a wide range of things

[1] Radd alMuhtaar: 9/530-531.

that can be counted as appropriate, it should at least not intrude upon the inappropriate and unacceptable form of conversation.

Men have been forbidden from meeting ladies in seclusion because this can allow Satan to play foul tricks. Umar (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Prophet ﷺ said,

لا يخلون رجل بامرأة الّا كان ثالثهما الشيطان۔

"A man and woman should never be together in seclusion. This is because in this case, the Satan is the third among them."[1]

It is not even appropriate to meet the lady one intends to marry in privacy.[2]

Hence, it is impermissible to meet or speak to unrelated men, be it the office or some other place. This can open up the ways to corruption. However, it is allowed to speak and discuss things with unrelated men in a gathering. If the unrelated lady is accompanied by her *mehram* or a reliable man or woman, then this would not be counted as seclusion and it would become permissible to speak to an unrelated man.[3]

c. The Qur'an has distinguished between the injunctions of the veil for young and elderly ladies:

وَالْقَوَاعِدُ مِنَ النِّسَآءِ الّٰتِيْ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ نِكَاحًا فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِنَّ جُنَاحٌ اَنْ يَّضَعْنَ
ثِيَابَهُنَّ غَيْرَ مُتَبَرِّجٰتٍ بِزِيْنَةٍ ۭ وَاَنْ يَّسْتَعْفِفْنَ خَيْرٌ لَّهُنَّ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ سَمِيْعٌ عَلِيْمٌ ۝۶۰

"And women of post-menstrual age who have no desire for marriage - there is no blame upon them for

[1] Tirmizi: Kitaab alRaza'a, Baab ma ja'a fi Karahiyat alDakhool ala alMugheebaat. Musnad Ahmad: Musnad Umar bin Khattab Hadith #178.

[2] Ibn Qudamah, alMughni: 9/490.

[3] adDur alMukhtaar ma'a Radd alMuhtaar: 9/530.

putting aside their outer garments [but] not displaying adornment. But to modestly refrain [from that] is better for them. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing."

[Surah anNoor ayat 60]

It is mentioned in Dur Mukhtar that hands can be shaken with such an old lady who is beyond the marriageable age. Her hands can be touched if there is no apprehension of immorality therein and a person can accompany her on a journey.[1]

It is important to note a couple of things in this regard:

1. Although the jurists permit ladies to keep their hands and faces exposed before unrelated men, this allowance has been made in view of some expediency or special need. Hence, people should be cautious not to take this as a general rule.
2. This allowance can be made use of only as per requirement, not more. A man can see the lady he wishes to marry but cannot touch her or shake hands with her. If she needs to testify in a court of law, she can be asked to uncover her face, but she cannot be touched. The rule of thumb in this regard is 'Concession is proportional to requirement'.[2]
3. There should not be any sexual motive or lust involved in exposing one's face or hands. The concession is rendered null and void if there is any such motive or emotion involved. Even a slave cannot see her mistress with a lecherous

[1] adDur alMukhtaar ma'a Radd alMuhtaar: 9/529.
[2] adDur alMukhtaar ma'a Radd alMuhtaar: 9/533.

gaze. She should not be seen if she happens to be a young lady.[1]

4. While it is permissible to see those parts of a slave girl's body that are usually exposed, she should not be glared at if she happens to be beautiful and can lead to the person getting aroused.[2]

These points suggest that it is not appropriate for any lady to work as a salesgirl or adopt any such profession which does not allow her to abide by the limits laid down by Islam with respect to the veil. Such professions require her to constantly engage with unrelated men with both the sexes freely interacting with each other. The woman is required to adopt a soft and alluring attitude in order to impress the costumer. This cannot be held permissible.

Certain crucial aspects:

There is an acute need to put our heads together on this issue in light of the current circumstances. The Prophet ﷺ has said that the woman is the manager and supervisor of her husband's home:

المرأةُ راعيةٌ على بيت بعلها و ولده وهى مسئولة عنهم۔

"A woman is in-charge of her husband's house and children and she would be held accountable for these."[3]

This includes taking care of the house, safeguarding her husband's wealth, bringing up the children and looking into their grooming. In the olden

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[1] adDur alMukhtaar ma'a Radd alMuhtaar: 9/532.

[2] Ibn Qudamah, alMughni: 9/498-499.

[3] Bukhari: Kitaab alAtaq, Baab Karahiyat alTatawul ala arRaqeeq. Muslim: Kitaab allmarah, Baab Fazilat allmam alAadil.

days, ladies used to devote their time for these tasks and used to occasionally help their husbands with the finances. But the situation is quite different today.

1. Earlier, women used to spend a lot of their time doing household work, preparing the food, cleaning the house and taking care of the children. In poorer families, the woman used to be constantly busy doing these things. However, we now have applicances to help her out at least in urban areas, saving a lot of her time.
2. There are crèches, maids and servants to look after the kids. They get admitted to nurseries as early as the age of three and then proceed to schools and colleges. In some instances, they begin to live in hostels right from their school days.
3. Life has become constrained. The money a man earns is usually insufficient, what with the expenses having increased and the standard of living gone up. One way of addressing this issue is by convincing the family to adopt an attitude of patience, gratitude and contentment over whatever they have and adjust in whatever money the husband is able to bring home. The second option is that the lady who is capable of earning money in a decent manner should do so, allowing the family to lead a comfortable life.
4. It is no doubt the prerogative of the husband to allow or disallow his wife to earn money. But preventing an educated and well qualified lady (who has a lot of time at her disposal and is capable of contributing towards the prosperity of her family) from doing so can lead to psychological stress and skirmishes. Hence, it is necessary that apart from the legal perspective, the question of

development and prosperity of the family should also be given due consideration while discussing this issue[1].

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[1] The author has elaborated on this topic in his book, 'The Family System of Islam' that has been published by Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers, New Delhi. Please refer the chapter, 'Women and Economics'.

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